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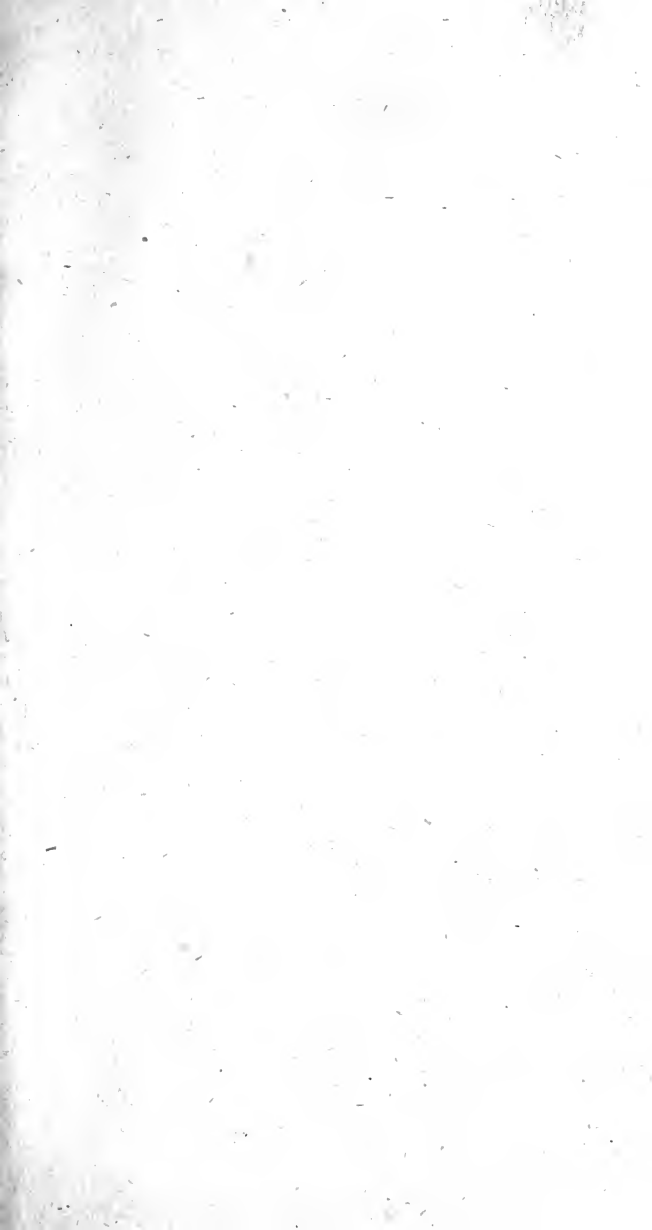


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VIVONIO.



A ROMANCE.



LANE, MINERVA PRESS, LEADENHALL STREET.



VIVONIO;

OR,

THE HOUR OF RETRIBUTION.

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

A YOUNG LADY.

Sophia Frances

Ask ye who hath done these deeds?

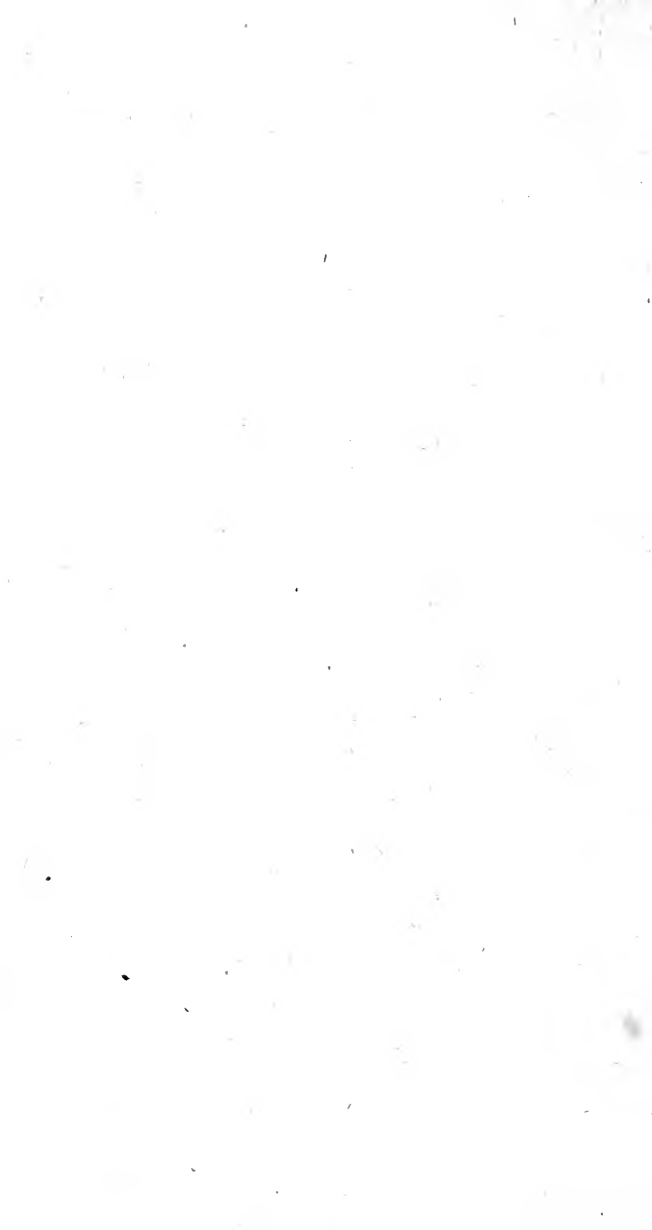
TASSO.

.. .. .
Even-handed Justice returns the poison'd chalice to our own lips.

SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva-Press,
FOR LANE, NEWMAN, AND CO.
LEADENHALL-STREET.
1806.



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V I V O N I O.

CHAP. I.

given by 15 Aug 1848 H.S. = 4v.
IN the summer of the year sixteen hundred and —, the splendid Pallazo of the Duke di Orenza, at Naples, exhibited, for several weeks, a continued scene of joy and festivity, in consequence of the nuptials of the lovely Adelaide di Orenza with the elegant and accomplished Marchese di Romanzini.

Adelaide was just nineteen when she became the wife of the Marchese. Surrounded by admirers, attracted by her exquisite beauty, her rank, and fortune, it was a

VOL. I.

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matter

matter of astonishment to all Naples when the nuptials of the beautiful heiress of Orenza and the Marchese di Romanzini were announced ; for, beside not being her equal in rank, his fortune was by no means such as would entitle him to hope for the inestimable treasure he had now obtained.

Most of the noble Neapolitan youths had solicited the hand of the lovely heiress ; but as they respectively failed to captivate her heart, they were rejected ; for the Duke, unlike parents in general, considered his daughter's happiness as the most essential point in a union that could only be dissolved by death ; therefore the amiable Adelaide was permitted to yield her hand to a lover whose inestimable virtues rendered him an object of universal esteem.

The Marchese di Romanzini was the last descendant of the noble house of Romanzini. The magnificence of his forefathers had much impaired the estates ; and Di Romanzini, unable to support the ancient splendour of his house, had spent several
years

years in visiting the different Courts of Europe.

But that love of our native country, which is inherent in every noble mind, would not permit the Marchese to absent himself longer than was necessary for arranging his affairs; and he returned, at the expiration of five years, with ardour, to the ancient Castle di Romanzini.

The Marchese was, at this period, six-and-twenty. He was very handsome. The manly dignity and grace of his person, could only be equalled by a countenance expressive of every noble and amiable affection of the soul.

Ever alive to the distresses of his fellow-creatures, his liberal hand supplied their wants, while his sympathy consoled their sufferings; the tremulous voice of age, and the lisp of infancy, blessed him; and the name of Di Romanzini was as well known in the haunts of sickness and woe, as in the splendid palace.

Yet the Marchese did not affect an

ostentatious display of public charity. No, the widows and orphans were carefully sought out in the recesses of misery ; and pining, unregarded merit, needed only to be known to experience his beneficence.

Di Romanzini, in his visits to the several foreign Courts, had paid his tribute of admiration to the beauties that adorned them ; but in Adelaide di Orenza alone he beheld that rare assemblage of beauty, modesty, and accomplishments, that enslaved his heart ; yet he did not dare to hope. The superior rank and wealth of the many noblemen that had been rejected, naturally led him to suppose he could not succeed, and a deep melancholy threatened to embitter his future days.

In vain he sought to fly from the object of his ardent affections. The Duke had been the early friend of the late Marchese, and he now eagerly cultivated the friendship of the present, whose opening virtues he had contemplated with the highest esteem ; and the Duke's increasing partiality
was

was such, that he would scarcely permit the Marchese to pass a day from the pallazo.

Under the delusion of friendship for the Duke, the unhappy Di Romanzini was thus almost constantly in the presence of the charming Adelaide, and attributed her marked preference to a wish of paying every attention to the favoured friend of her father.

The Duke, however, was not so deficient in just discrimination. He perceived with delight that his daughter was not insensible to the merits of the Marchese, and also that Di Romanzini was drooping under the oppressive sorrow of a concealed passion ; and thus assured of their mutual regards, he, at length, proposed the alliance.

The rapturous emotions of the Marchese on this occasion, had nearly proved as fatal as his despair had like to have been. Scarcely daring to credit the evidence of his senses, he eagerly sought his adored Adelaide, who, covered with blushes, was obliged several times to assure him of her obedience to the wishes of the Duke, ere

he could believe his ardent hopes confirmed.

At length the happy morn arrived that gave the lovely Adelaide to her adoring Di Romanzini.

A month after the solemnization of the nuptials, the Duke accompanied the Marchese and Marchesa to a beautiful villa, where this amiable pair, retired from the tumultuous gaiety of Naples, enjoyed the most exquisite felicity.

This marriage was, however, the source of keen anguish to the Count Alvania, nephew to the Duke. The Count regarded Adelaide with the fondest adoration, and could he have obtained a return of his affection, he hoped the Duke would not have withheld his approbation. Alvania was perfectly well informed of the Duke's sentiments respecting a union of hearts; and he entertained no fears from inferiority of rank.

This young nobleman was the only son of the late Count Alvania, who was descended

descended from a noble family in Spain. The late Count had visited Naples in compliance with the wish of the Duke di Orenza, with whom he had formerly been on intimate terms. Here the Count soon became enamoured of the lovely Eleanora di Orenza, sister to the Duke, and having obtained her hand, he fixed his residence in Italy, where he ended his days, ere his son had attained his seventh year. The Countess did not long survive her lamented Lord; and the young Ferdinand Alvanio was left an orphan, under the kind protection of the Duke di Orenza, and his beloved aunt, the amiable Duchess, by whose marked favour he was much distinguished. But this affectionate relative, this second mother, was soon called to join her regretted friend in the realms of bliss, and left the Duke, Adelaide, her only child, and the young Ferdinand, to deplore their irreparable loss.

The beautiful little Adelaide di Orenza was now placed in a convent, under the

care of the truly amiable Santa Clara, youngest sister to the Duke, and Abbess of Santa Maria; and at the age of eighteen returned to the pallazo of the Duke, to become the idol of all who beheld her.

The infantile affection of Ferdinand soon revived, with all the energy of sensibility and love. He was now near twenty, and possessed, in an eminent degree, every grace and accomplishment calculated to captivate the female heart. He was extremely handsome, and the softness of his manners was animated with sense and feeling. But his lovely cousin could never force her heart to acknowledge his claims; and when her partiality for the Marchese di Romanzini was avowed, Ferdinand generously suppressed all appearance of dissatisfaction, and submitted to his fate with such delicacy and resignation, as effectually secured him the unceasing esteem of the Duke, and also that of the more fortunate Di Romanzini.

But the Duke, apprehending that the feelings of Ferdinand might injure his health,

health, proposed his visiting some distant relations in Spain; and the young Count departed from Naples, three days previous to the nuptials of Adelaide.

A variety of objects dissipated his sorrow; and the Duke had the satisfaction of hearing, in less than three months, that the Count requested his permission to espouse Donna Isabella de Riverra, the idolized offspring of Don Anselmo de Riverra, a grandee of considerable consequence at the Court of Spain.

This permission was most joyfully granted, and Alvania became the envied Lord of Isabella. The Count wrote with rapture of the beauties and virtues of his Lady, and promised himself the utmost pleasure in introducing her, on his return to Naples, to the Duke and his amiable family.

In about a year and a half after their marriage, the lovely Marchesa presented to her adoring Di Romanzini a pledge of their mutual affection; and the birth of this son

was celebrated with the most brilliant rejoicings.

The young Vivonio soon became the idol of the Duke and his parents; and the uncommon beauty and sweet disposition of the child, endeared him more and more to all the domestics.

For near three years the Marchese enjoyed that pure bliss which an amiable and lovely wife, a child such as the fondest hopes can form, and a chosen society of friends, can confer. Hospitality and munificence enlivened the ancient halls of Di Romanzini, and the voice of sorrow and complaining was unheard.

CHAP. II.

ABOUT the autumn of the third year, the Marchesa was near producing an addition to the family. Great preparations were making at the Castle di Romanzini for the reception of the little stranger, and the arrival of the Marchese and Marchesa, who were now at the villa ; but, alas ! how soon were those prospects, which, in perspective, promised years of felicity, fatally reversed !

The evening previous to their intended departure, the Marchesa had retired to a favourite recess, in a small grove of myrtle, at some distance from the villa. As his

Lady continued absent several hours, the Marchese was alarmed at her protracted stay, and hurried to the spot. The door of the little temple was fastened. The Marchese called tenderly on the name of Adelaide; but no answer was returned. Again his voice echoed through the valley; but still his Adelaide replied not.

One of the windows was open; it was low, and the Marchese sprung into the room. Horror fixed him to the spot.—His Adelaide lay lifeless on the floor! her hair dishevelled, her dress torn, and the ashy paleness of death shaded her lovely cheek!

For some moments Di Romanzini stood, wildly gazing on this distracting sight. Frantic cries of anguish at length burst from his lips. He caught his dying Adelaide to his agonized breast; his piercing cries, his caresses, failed to revive her, and he sunk, overwhelmed with grief and despair, when the door flew open, and several domestics rushed in.

The dreadful shrieks of the Marchese
3 were

were fortunately heard by one of the gardeners, who instantly gave the alarm ; and the servants, to whom affection and terror gave uncommon speed, entered the apartment just as the wretched Marchese fell.

Astonishment and horror rendered the faithful domestics almost as motionless as the unhappy pair they fearfully gazed on ; and it was some time before the Marchese and Marchesa could be conveyed to the villa, and medical assistance procured.

By the skill and care of the physicians, the Marchesa at length shewed some signs of reanimation. She opened her languid eyes just as the Marchese entered her chamber. Feebly extending her hand, she essayed to speak ; but the words died on her lips, and she sunk on his bosom in successive faintings. In less than three hours she gave birth to a daughter, and expired !

Terror, grief, and consternation reigned throughout the villa. The shock the unfortunate Marchese had received, deprived him

him of his senses. He sat by the bedside, and with a vacant stare contemplated the remains of his wife, till the physicians led him, unresistingly, away to his apartment, where every possible means were employed to rouse him from the melancholy state of abstraction into which he had sunk, but without effect.

The infant, immediately after its birth, was consigned to the care of a nurse, whom the foresight of the physicians had caused to be summoned, and removed to a distant apartment, where the young Vivonio was carefully confined by his attendants during the shocking events of the evening.

The innocent child was delighted with his innocent sister, and smiled and played, unconscious of the irreparable loss he had just sustained.

Soon after the Marchesa had expired, the truly good and virtuous Father Benvolio arrived.

One of the domestics, terrified at the idea of his Lady's dying without receiving
the

the sacrament, flew to the neighbouring convent for her confessor. Father Benvolio was unfortunately absent ; but on his return, being acquainted with the summons, he hastened to the villa, but arrived too late—the lovely Marchesa was then no more.

Father Benvolio was an aged man. The heavy hand of affliction had laid its weight upon his heart, and he knew how to feel for, and sympathize with the unhappy.

With astonishment and grief he listened to the recital of the dreadful occurrences of the last five hours ; and his mind was so agonized, that it was some time before he could collect himself sufficiently to offer consolation to the weeping domestics.

When more composed, he repaired to the chamber of the Marchesa. The corse of that lovely woman soon met his eyes ; tears of anguish wetted his cheek, and his trembling lips murmured pious prayers for her immortal felicity.

In

IN a short time Father Benvolio experienced the calm serenity which ever attends the sincere prayer of the truly religious; and leaving the chamber of death, he was conducted by the attendants to the apartment where the lovely Vivonio, and his infant sister, were placed.

The sweet, innocent smiles of Vivonio pierced his heart, and the tear of pity fell on the rosy cheek of the little cherub, as he fondly caressed him.

To his surprise, Benvolio found the infant girl, notwithstanding her premature birth, likely to live; and having ordered preparations to be made for the performance of the sacred rites, which were to admit the infant into the holy mother church, he made several enquiries relative to the situation of the Duke, who was then at his pallazo, at Naples.

Father Benvolio advised that a messenger should immediately be dispatched to the Duke; and undertook to write a letter, which

which would cautiously prepare that nobleman for the detail of the unforeseen calamities that had fallen on his house.

The messenger was soon on the road, and the benevolent Father proceeded to take such measures as he thought most proper to ascertain whether any stranger had visited the temple during the time of the Marchesa being there; and on the following morning he learned that two men had been observed hurrying out of the grove about the time the fatal event occurred; but all attempts to trace them further were ineffectual.

The return of the messenger from Naples now engaged the attention of the Father, who heard, with much concern, that the Duke had been unable to bear his misfortune with fortitude, and was immediately confined to his apartment, by excessive grief and consequent indisposition. Unfortunately the messenger's imprudence had rendered all the Father's care abortive; for, on being minutely questioned by the Duke, he

he communicated the deadly intelligence in its full force, and the Duke sunk under the shock. Father Benvolio now felt himself much embarrassed, as he was ignorant of the Duke's wishes respecting the place of the Marchesa's interment, and he knew not where to apply for information. This dilemma, however, he was soon relieved from by Lauretta, the favourite attendant of the late Marchesa, who informed him that the family of Orenza were always interred in the Convent of Santa Maria, near Benevento, that Convent having been founded by the ancestors of the Duke, in the year fourteen hundred and three.

Preparations for the funeral were accordingly commenced; and the Father sent information to the pallazo, that the funeral rites were intended to take place in four days.

An air of desolation and gloom was spread throughout the villa, once the glad-some abode of love and innocent festivity. The pale horror-struck countenances of the domestics

domestics spoke feelingly their grief and regret; and sighs and tears alone interrupted the mournful silence.

On the morning of the third day, an ancient and respectable domestic of the Duke, attended by several others, arrived at the villa, to render their assistance to the good Benvolio, and to present their Lord's grateful acknowledgments to the Father, for the anxious solicitude and pious concern he had shewn on the melancholy occasion.

Father Benvolio's sorrow was much increased by witnessing the deep affliction of the ancient Bernardo, as he knelt beside the pallid remains of his revered padrone's lamented offspring. The loud sighs and agonizing sobs of the other domestics were not more affecting than the silent tear which trembled in the eye of Bernardo, as he shaded his face with his silver locks, to conceal his grief.

When the sad attendants quitted the apartment of the Marchesa, Bernardo requested

requested permission to behold Vivonio and his infant sister. Father Benvolio immediately sent a servant to enquire whether the former was risen; but what language can paint the feelings of these afflicted persons, when the domestic hastily returned, pale as death, and wringing her hands, exclaimed—"He is murdered!"

In an instant every one flew to the chamber of Vivonio, where they beheld Marina, his attendant, laying half out of the bed, apparently lifeless, and the blood still trickling from a wound in her arm.

She was immediately raised, and a strict search made for the child; but he was nowhere to be found; and neither Lauretta or the nurse of the infant girl could give the slightest insight into this new disaster, as they slept in an inner apartment, and were not disturbed by the most trivial sound during the night.

The wound of Marina was not mortal; and she was soon sufficiently recovered to give the impatient domestics an account of
all

all she knew respecting this new calamity, and which was to the following effect:—

Marina had been awakened by a light glancing on her eyes, and looking up, beheld a man with a lamp in one hand, while in the other he raised a dagger. In a low voice he commanded her to give him the child, and cautioned her to be careful not to awake him, swearing that if he made an outcry, he would instantly dispatch him.—“He held the dagger so close to my neck, that I dared hardly move,” continued Marina; “but still I was determined not to give up the innocent babe, who was locked in my arms. I made a catch at the dagger, but failed in the attempt; and the villain immediately plunged it into my arm, and tore the child from me. I remember no more.”

This account did not lessen the mystery, for Marina could not recollect having ever seen the assassin before; but she confidently averred he had made so deep an impression
on

on her mind, that she should know him from a thousand.

The grief of the domestics for the loss of the Marchesa, the unhappy state of the Marchese, and also that of the Duke, seemed, by this new calamity, to be converted into rage. They united, in the most solemn oaths, to sacrifice their lives, if necessary, in discovering the atrocious author of these black transactions; and Father Benvolio encouraged their just indignation.

In a few minutes every domestic in the villa that could be spared, was ready to accompany the Duke's attendants to traverse the country in every direction, in pursuit of the young Vivonio. Bernardo commanded them, in the name of the Duke, to promise the most liberal rewards to any person who should be able to give the least information; and he also sent orders to the criminal officers, for the apprehension of the villainous destroyer of the peace of this once happy family, Marina having furnished

furnished a minute description of the assassin.

When they had departed on their different routes, Bernardo repaired to the chamber of the Marchese. There he met additional cause of woe. The unhappy Di Romanzini was still under the influence of a lamentable derangement of intellect, and noticed not Bernardo, who soon retired, weeping the misfortunes of his beloved master ; for the physicians, who constantly attended in the chamber of the Marchese, scarcely entertained any hopes of his recovery.

The night passed heavily on. Early on the following morning several of the servants returned from the pursuit, fatigued and disappointed. In the course of the day the remainder arrived, and had been equally unsuccessful.

Father Benvolio, now finding they must leave to time the elucidation of these mysterious occurrences, turned all his attention to the safety of the infant Rosalia, and the health of the Marchese.

The

The remains of the Marchesa were privately interred in the family vault in the Convent of Santa Maria, whither they were attended by the Father Benvolio, and several of the Duke's domestics; Bernardo and Lauretta, with the other domestics of the villa, remaining to attend the Marchese, and guard the hapless infant.

With sentiments of admiration and respect, Benvolio beheld the amiable Abbess Santa Clara, who, pale and agitated, endeavoured to set an example of pious resignation to the weeping nuns, who surrounded the bier of their beloved companion, and whose soft chanting was frequently interrupted by their sighs and tears. But Santa Clara could not long support the painful restraint she had imposed on her feelings; and before the service was concluded, she fainted, and was conveyed from the chapel to her apartment, where she remained a prey to sorrow for several hours.

The unpleasant task of informing the
Lady

Lady Abbess of the disappearance of the young Vivonio, detained Father Benvolio at the convent, and he was obliged to exert every degree of fortitude in his power, to prepare himself for the interview he had requested.

Santa Clara attended in the parlour, and expressed her gratitude for his humane attentions, in the most feeling terms ; and, when he reluctantly communicated the dreadful tidings of Vivonio's loss, she was already so well prepared, by his religious and elevated discourse, that she resigned herself to the will of Heaven, with meek submission, till the agonizing conviction of it being some secret enemy, who was thus destroying the felicity of her beloved family, struck on her heart, and renewed her grief. Terrified with alarm for the safety of the infant Rosalia, she requested Father Benvolio to convey the child to the convent as speedily as possible, as she would then be entirely secure under her protection.

The Father acquiesced in her wish, and

promised to send the infant, with its nurse, under the care of Bernardo, on his return to the villa. Should the Duke di Orenza approve the measure, Benvolio then mentioned an intention of visiting Naples, to enquire into the state of the Duke's health, and to prepare him for the recital of the particulars of Vivonio's absence. He then bade an affecting adieu to Santa Clara, and shortly after proceeded to Naples, where he had the satisfaction to find the Duke much recovered.

The Duke received Benvolio with every demonstration of friendship, and, in the most affecting manner, professed his unalterable esteem. The mind of the Duke was deeply impressed with the recent misfortunes; and Nature spoke in the anguish of the parent, while Religion and Reason taught him submission to the direful dispensations of Heaven.

After mentioning the unhappy Marchese with the liveliest sensibility, the Duke enquired for the children; his look, his manner,

ner, spoke to the heart of Benvolio, and he turned aside to conceal his emotion.

“ I suppose, Father, the infant is no more ? ”

“ *She* lives,” replied Benvolio, greatly agitated.

“ My boy, my Vivonio, is he then—— ”

Benvolio arose, and paced the room in emotion. The unfortunate Di Orenza uttered a deep and hollow sigh. The Father hastily approached the couch on which the Duke reclined, and perceived that the venerable man strove to conceal the tears which he could not restrain.

In a short time he appeared to be relieved by these tears, and he entreated the Father to acquaint him with the particulars of Vivonio’s death. In the most cautious manner Benvolio informed the Duke of the circumstances that had taken place with respect to the child, and had the pleasure to perceive that the Duke entertained hopes of being able to recover his beloved Vivonio—hopes which Benvolio did not dare

to discourage, as he trusted they would contribute to his noble friend's convalescence.

The Duke expressed the most decided approbation of Santa Clara's proposal, to take the little Rosalia under her protection, and directed Father Benvolio to comply with her wishes, and to send the infant, properly protected, to the convent, immediately on his return to the villa.

The Duke attempted to persuade Father Benvolio to remain in Naples for the night, but the benevolent man excused himself, being impatient to return to console the sorrowful inhabitants of the villa, and to fulfil every duty to humanity; and he departed more than ever honoured and esteemed by the good Di Orenza.

Yet the Duke did not permit him to depart, until he had promised to return with the Marchese, if he should providentially recover, or if the physicians should judge it safe for him to be removed in his present condition, a circumstance the Duke
ardently

ardently desired, as he could not consider even the life of the Marchese safe while he remained at the villa.

CHAP. III.

ON his return, Benvolio found the Marchese still under the influence of his cruel malady; but he observed that the little Rosalia gave evident signs of her health being no way affected by the unfortunate circumstances which attended her birth.

As soon as the physicians would allow of the infant's removal, preparations were begun for her departure, to the great joy of Bernardo and all the domestics of the villa, who were also rejoiced to hear that the

good Duke was recovering, and that he intended to take, what he hoped might prove effectual, methods for discovering the authors of the diabolical schemes that had been so fatally executed.

With surprise and pleasure Benvolio at length heard the physicians acquiesce in the Duke's desire of removing the Marchese; and they now declared their opinion, that, as his complaint was seated in the mind, change of place was most likely to produce good effects, and remove the idiotic stupor under which he laboured.

In a few days every thing was ready for the departure of the inhabitants of the villa, and Father Benvolio having obtained permission to absent himself for some time, accompanied them to Naples.

To the unspeakable joy of the Father, the Marchese, several times during the journey, regarded him with attention; and the physicians, who accompanied him in the carriage, entertained the most pleasing hopes from this circumstance, as it was the
first

first time the Marchese had discovered any symptom of sensibility since his illness.

The meeting of the Duke and this mournful party was affecting beyond description. The Marchese, during the interview, again shewed some signs of returning reason, and the hope of his recovery threw a cheering ray on the pervading gloom. When the Duke's emotion had a little subsided, Father Benvolio informed him, that, at the earnest entreaties of the aged Bernardo, he had taken the liberty to bring the infant Rosalia and her attendants to the pallazo, previous to her entering the convent, in the hope that he would bestow on the infant his paternal benediction.

The Duke was much agitated, but on the Marchese's being conducted to the apartments prepared for his reception, the former desired to see the infant, who was immediately brought into his presence by the faithful Lauretta and the nurse. The Duke took the little creature in his arms, pressed her to his bosom, while the tear of

parental sorrow fell on the cheek of the unconscious babe. After retaining her for a while, the Duke returned her to the arms of her attendants, declaring that he could not consent to part with the lovely little Rosalia for some time, and accordingly sent an apology to Santa Clara for detaining her charge.

About two months after the decease of the Marchesa, as Father Benvolio was one day sitting beside the bed of the Marchese, he perceived the patient regard him with some emotion, and immediately after he heard him pronounce his name, then heaving a deep sigh, added—"My Adelaide!" and burst into tears.

With what joyful sensations did the Monk watch beside the suffering Marchese, and with what devout gratitude did he render thanks to Heaven for these proofs of returning sensibility! When he was perfectly assured that the Marchese was restored to his reason, he flew to communicate the happy intelligence to the Duke, who almost
forgot

forgot his sorrow at the loss of his beloved and lamented Adelaide and Vivonio, in joy at the recovery of Di Romanzini.

The Duke accompanied Father Benvolio to the chamber of the Marchese, whom they found still weeping—this effusion they encouraged, on a hint from the physicians; they spoke to him of Adelaide, her virtues, her beauty, and the enumeration caused the good Duke and Benvolio to mingle their tears with those of the Marchese.

Di Romanzini now anxiously called for his son, his Vivonio, but appeared unconscious of having another child to claim his pity and affection.

The physicians, as had been concerted, objected to the interview, till the Marchese should be more composed, and the Duke tenderly represented to him the imprudence of agitating himself farther; but it was with much difficulty they could persuade him to yield to their remonstrances.

“ Ah!” exclaimed the Marchese, “ is it possible you can deny me such a consolation?”

solation? My dearest Father, suffer me to fold to my bosom my child, the child of Adelaide. And do you still, most excellent of men, do you still bid me endure existence, after such a loss? Say, I conjure you, has any clue been found to guide us to the horrid cause of our beloved Adelaide's——”

The Duke was too much affected to reply.

“ Alas, my Lord!” said Father Benvolio, “ every enquiry that it was possible to suggest, has been made, but all still remains an unfathomable mystery; yet do not doubt but Heaven, which for wise and unquestionable purposes, sometimes permits villainy to triumph, will, in its own good time, reveal the authors of those unforeseen calamities.”

At that moment Lauretta, unconscious of the happy change which had just taken place, entered the chamber with the lovely infant in her arms.

“ Is it possible!” cried the Marchese,
gazing

gazing on the sweet innocent, whose cheeks were dimpled with a smile, “is not this delusion! am I so blest! do I possess another pledge of my Adelaide’s affection? Oh, speak! is this beauteous babe mine?”

“She is, she is, my Frederico!” rapturously exclaimed the Duke, while the tears of joyful emotion fell from his eyes.

The Marchese clasped the infant in his feeble arms, and vowed to live, to cherish the representative of the sainted Adelaide.

Again the Marchese entreated to behold his son, but was positively refused; however, he now more readily resigned himself to the will of his friends, as he was much consoled by finding himself, a second time, a parent; but he would not permit the infant to be removed from his apartment. In this particular he was indulged, and Lauretta remained with the child, until the effects of an opiate, which the physician had ordered to be administered, produced a peaceful repose, to the enjoyment of which he was left.

With hearts much relieved from the burden that had oppressed them, the Duke and Father Benvolio quitted the apartment of the Marchese, and were immediately met by a train of faithful domestics, whose respectful and affectionate enquiries were answered with grateful affability.

Highly gratified with their sincere and lively indications of joy, for the returning health of the Marchese, the Duke passed on to his own apartment, amidst the silent blessings of his dependants, to whom he had ever proved a father and a friend. An almost patriarchal simplicity and dignity graced the manners of the Duke ; his heart was open to those delightful emotions which the philanthropist will ever experience, from the conviction, that he endeavours to ameliorate the situation of all who come within the reach of his pity and benevolence.

But this short gleam of sunshine was soon overclouded by the painful anxiety which the Duke felt respecting the disclosure

closure of Vivonio's loss to the Marchese, and Father Benvolio was equally embarrassed.

The physicians attended in the Duke's apartment, to consult on the most proper means to pursue, and it was at length decided, that the Marchese should be informed that his son was at present confined by illness incidental to children; and as the Marchese had, contrary to all expectation, manifested so lively an affection for his infant daughter, it might very reasonably be hoped, that, when he should be sufficiently recovered to hear the truth, it would not be attended with much danger, especially as the pious Benvolio undertook to prepare and strengthen the mind of the Marchese, before the disclosure should be made.

In a few hours they were summoned to the apartment of the Marchese, by the good old Bernardo, whose animated countenance informed them, ere he spoke, that the patient was much restored.

The

The Marchese indeed appeared to be infinitely revived, and his eyes displayed something of their former lustre, when the Duke and Benvolio entered the chamber.

“Where are my children, my dearest Father? I feel new life animate my heart—let me behold them—you can no longer refuse,” said the Marchese to the Duke, who trembled for the event of their fabricated tale.

The latter now, in the most soothing terms, regretted that the young Vivonio was confined to his apartment, by an indisposition which would prevent his attendance, but ordered the infant Rosalia to be immediately brought to the Marchese, who was much alarmed, and made the most earnest and scrutinizing enquiries respecting his son.

In a tone of bitter anguish, he entreated them not to conceal the truth.—“My heart informs me,” continued the Marchese, “that I have no son. I beseech you, keep me not in this agonizing suspense—I will
endeavour

endeavour to bear the worst with firmness."

"Dear Frederico, my son," returned the Duke, "do not imagine our Vivonio to be no more; he lives—you may entertain every hope—but it will be some time ere——"

The Duke hesitated. The Marchese breathed a silent thanksgiving to Heaven, then enquired the nature of his son's complaint; and being satisfied by the physicians in that respect, at the unavoidable expence of their veracity, he became more composed, and lavished a thousand caresses on his infant daughter.

The Marchese now recovered daily, and his little Rosalia became more and more his delight; he was also highly pleased with Father Benvolio, and listened to his mild precepts of resignation with sentiments of grateful friendship and esteem.

As he was soon able to leave his apartment, the real circumstances relative to Vivonio could no longer be concealed; but the

the Father observed such prudence in revealing the truth, that the Marchese bore the recital with more fortitude than could have been expected.

Like the Duke, he immediately indulged the fond idea of recovering his child, and increased every precaution for the re-establishment of his health, being determined to traverse the continent in search of his lost Vivonio. The Duke's hopes, however, were now almost extinguished.

The splendid rewards offered to any who could give information of the young Vivonio, or for the apprehension of the wretch who had borne him away, would have tempted a full disclosure from those concerned even in the iniquitous transaction, had they not been more than proof against the power of gold—certain it is, the offers of reward were of no avail.

The Marchese, true to his resolve of travelling over the continent, spoke only of his design, and, with the Duke's approbation, determined to agree to Santa Clara's
repeated

repeated requests, and to place the little Rosalia under her protection, the moment he could visit the convent.

On the banks of the Volturno stood an ancient castle belonging to the Duke, which had been the favourite residence of the Duchess, but after her decease the Duke seldom visited it; it was situated about two leagues from the Convent of Santa Maria, and one from Benevento.

Thither the Duke intended to retire during the absence of the Marchese, as its vicinity to the convent would enable him to see his little grand-daughter more frequently than he could possibly do, if he resided at Naples.

This intention of the Duke gave the most unbounded satisfaction to Di Romanzini and to Father Benvolio, who now requested the interest of the former to obtain permission for him to leave the convent to which he belonged, that he might enter another of the same order near Benevento, where he might enjoy the society of the Duke,

Duke, whenever his illustrious friend should please to admit him, during the absence of the Marchese.

If any thing could have encreased the friendship of the Duke and Marchese for Benvolio, this consideration and truly friendly proposition would. His offer was accepted with avidity, and the Duke very soon obtained the desired permission.

The health of the Marchese being now almost re-established, he remained at Naples no longer than to bid adieu to his numerous friends, then quitted the scenes of gaiety and tumult with the Duke, to pass a few days at the Castle of Orenza, and to visit the Convent of Santa Maria, previous to his intended tour.

CHAP. IV.

FOR several days, neither the Duke nor the Marchese could summon resolution to visit the Convent of Santa Maria; and when they did venture to approach the sacred walls, within which reposed the remains of the lamented Marchesa, their anguish overpowered their resignation, and every affectionate and religious argument of Santa Clara failed to ameliorate their sorrow.

On the tomb of his Adelaide, the Marchese would have vowed to devote the remainder of his days to a monastic life, had not the representations of the Duke deterred him from executing his frantic resolve.

The

The Madre Santa Clara too, with all that delicacy and feeling so perceptible in truly virtuous minds, sympathized in his griefs; yet mildly and judiciously endeavoured to divert the excess of his sorrow, by turning his thoughts on the infant Rosalia, of whose safety she expressed an apprehensive concern, reverting to her wish of having the sweet innocent resigned to her care.

The Marchese gratefully assented to her desire, and promised that, in a few days, the child should become an inmate of the convent; but it was agreed that the tranquillity of her youth should not be embittered by the knowledge of the disastrous fate of her angel mother. The uncertain situation of her brother she was to be made acquainted with, that she might be accustomed to the idea of resigning to him, should he ever be recovered, the immense possessions she would otherwise inherit.

The Madre approved of the Marchese's intention of travelling, provided he used every precaution for personal safety, which
the

the Duke assured her, would not be neglected.

The Marchese bade an affecting adieu to the amiable Abbess, and returned to devote the few hours preceding his departure to his lovely little daughter.

On the following morning, however, the Marchese accompanied the infant and her attendants to the convent, and resigned her, in the most solemn and pathetic manner, to the care of Santa Clara, who received her with tears of maternal tenderness.

The amiable sisterhood, fondly attached to their superior, whose benignity and goodness of heart taught her to soften, as much as possible, their secluded state, loaded the beautiful little Rosalia with praises and caresses; and many, while the sighs of remembrance heaved their feeling bosoms, thought they perceived a striking resemblance, in the features of the lovely infant, to those of their regretted Marchesa.

The day that admitted the little Rosalia to Santa Maria was dedicated to innocent festivity, and each sister strove to banish
unpleasing

unpleasing reflections from the feeling mind of their beloved Lady Abbess.

A thousand times the Marchese strained the sweet infant to his bosom, ere he tore himself away, then returned towards the castle, forlorn and sad, to prepare for his journey.

The Marchese and his attendants were proceeding slowly, when a man, mounted on a fleet horse, passed him, then looked back earnestly at him, and, checking the animal, returned, and presented a small billet, then rode on with the utmost speed.

The Marchese opened the billet, and, to his terror and astonishment, found it contained the following words:

“ DI ROMANZINI,

“ Your son is dead!—my revenge is complete. Fool! didst thou suppose I had forgotten the scorn and falsehood of Olivia di Metelli? No—be assured my *hatred* shall never cease.

“ SPIGNOLA.”

“ Fly!”

“Fly!” cried the Marchese, when he had regained the power of speech, “fly! pursue that villain, and——”

Fortunately they were just at the gates of the castle; for the Marchese, entirely overcome by the shock, fell from his horse into the arms of the faithful servants that attended him.

Tremblingly they conveyed him to the saloon, where the Duke sat, who gazed, silent and horror-struck, not even daring to ask the cause of this new misfortune.

The Marchese opened his eyes, and turning them on the affrighted Duke, exclaimed, while he pointed to the billet which had fallen from his hand—“Oh, read! my father, read!”

The Duke, with trembling hand, caught up the fatal scrawl; but scarcely had he read the contents, when the servants, who had pursued the messenger, brought him into the saloon.

The Marchese had no sooner cast his eye on the fellow, than he recognized in
him

him the servant of Spignola. Starting up, he seized the man, and in his rage vowed to annihilate him, unless he instantly informed him where to find his master.

The fellow intreated to be disengaged from his hold, and promised to discover all he knew.

“Where is your master?” cried the Marchese.

“Indeed, my Lord, I do not know. Signor Spignola quitted Naples a few weeks ago, I believe, and if my life was to be the consequence, I cannot tell where he went to; but if you will allow me, my Lord, I will tell you all I know about him.”

The Marchese hastily ordered the man to proceed.

“It is now, I believe, five years since you were at Padua, my Lord—well you know, my Lord, what happened *there*, and at Florence. You know, after Signor Spignola made up the quarrel, he discovered Signora Olivia, and carried her off, no one knew where: well, be that as it may,

may, he did not return to Padua for near a year; however, when he did return, he was very well pleased to find his household in proper order—for he had remitted a year's wages for all the servants, and commanded me to retain them in their situations till his return.

“ As I had strictly fulfilled the Signor's orders, he took a great deal of notice of me, and let me so far into his confidence as to inform me that Olivia had again given him the slip, and was gone off with another, but not before he was heartily tired of her.

“ For some time a thousand dissipations engaged my master, and I too led a gay life; and, in short, my master plunged into all sorts of folly, and soon became much involved. One night he came home very late, and called all the domestics together, and paid them off every one, me among the rest—and the next morning early he left Padua, and I saw him no more, till within this month.”

“Are you certain you do not know where he went to?” anxiously demanded the Marchese.

“I am very sure I do not, my Lord; for my master had not quitted Padua a week before I entered into the service of a nobleman, and attended him to Germany, he being a native of Austria—but I disliked my situation, and soon quitted him. I then attended a lady to France: I was equally unfortunate in her service; for the lady was suddenly carried off by her relations, and placed in a convent. Afterwards I was wandering about for some time. I have been at Naples now about three months; and a few weeks ago, as I was strolling near Portici, I encountered the Signor Spignola; he was so pale and altered, that I scarcely knew him. I took the liberty of making several enquiries relative to his situation, but was angrily repulsed; and he entrusted me with the billet I just now, my Lord, delivered to you; and he gave me a purse full of ducats, on my promising to leave it
at

at the Duke's pallazo in less than a month. This injunction I thought very odd at the time; however I did not say any thing, but determined to do as he desired. When I went to the pallazo, I found the family had quitted it, and retired to this castle, whither I was immediately proceeding, when I encountered you, my Lord. I am truly sorry," continued the man, "that I cannot give any farther information respecting Signor Spignola: I have never seen or heard of him since he gave me the billet; but if ever I——"

"You must remain here," interrupted the Marchese, "till I have made such enquiries as will either confirm the truth of your assertions, or by convicting you of falsehood, enable me to compel you to deliver that villain up to justice. Bernardo, conduct this young man to the south tower, and see that he is provided with every thing necessary; he must not be suffered to depart."

“ I am very willing to stay, my Lord,” replied the man; “ your enquiries will only convince you that I have spoken truth.”

Sebastian, for so was this man called, respectfully bowed, and withdrew with Bernardo.

“ My dear father,” said the Marchese to the Duke, “ there is great plausibility in this man’s account, yet I dare not rely on it. I will myself depart for Naples immediately: possibly I may——”

“ My dear Frederico,” replied the Duke, “ you forget that I am utterly at a loss to account for what I have heard of this dreadful affair. Who is this Signor Spignola ?”

“ Pardon me, I entreat,” returned the Marchese, “ my distracted ideas: this wretch has almost deprived me of reason—I am amazed by what strange fatality I could ever forget him.”

The Marchese paused a few moments, and then proceeded thus :

“ Some time before I returned to Naples,
I made

I made a short stay at Padua, where it was my direful misfortune to become acquainted with this Spignola: he had just taken possession of a large estate; his birth was respectable, and his establishment brilliant; and, being a man of engaging talents, his society was generally sought. Spignola was naturally haughty and vindictive; but his exterior was prepossessing; and, when occasion required, he could assume the most amiable manners: he professed a particular friendship towards me, and, dreadful delusion! I imagined him sincere.

“ He was at this time paying his addresses to Signora Olivia di Metelli, a lovely orphan, who resided with an aunt, who idolized her, and who intended to bequeath her an easy fortune. Olivia was handsome, and apparently strictly virtuous; and, on seeing her, I expressed my approbation of his choice, in the terms I thought her merits claimed.

“ Elated with the admiration which the beauty and talents of his mistress excited, Spignola frequently forced me to accom-

pany him to Signora Bernini's, and for some time our friendship appeared unabated: suddenly, however, he became cold, formal, and suspicious—avoided me, and yet privately watched all my actions; but it was not till I had received a passionate billet from Olivia, that I could account for his altered conduct.

“ This imprudent epistle was filled with complaints of my want of discernment—her affection for me—her aversion to Spignola—finally, she requested my regard, and vowed that no power on earth should unite her to Spignola.

“ Disgusted with this proof of forward boldness and infidelity, in a young female I had much respected, I hastily quitted Padua, leaving a line for Spignola, informing him I was called suddenly away, and bidding him adieu. I proceeded to Florence, where I had not remained a week, when, one evening as I was returning from an entertainment with a friend, I was attacked by a man masked, who slightly wounded me. I was within a few doors of my own residence.

residence. My friend had presence of mind to rush into a house, the door of which stood open, and, instantly alarming the inhabitants, the assassin was pursued and taken.

“ The fellow, on a promise of being immediately liberated, confessed that he had been employed by a stranger, whose name he believed was Spignola. This information I received without surprise; however, I desired the vile wretch to tell his guilty employer, I forgave the attempt, as I sincerely pitied him.

“ On the following day a stranger requested to be permitted to see me. I ordered him to be admitted, and beheld Spignola. He appeared confused and penitent, and accounted for his rashness by informing me, that Olivia had eloped from her aunt, and no person could form an idea whither she had flown; he had supposed that *I* had aided her flight; and having, without difficulty, traced my route to Florence, he had, in a paroxysm of rage,

D. 4.

followed.

followed me, and, urged by infuriate jealousy, sought to destroy me.

“ His apparent regret and sorrow interested me, and I could not resist assuring him all was forgotten. Indeed I pitied him; and, though nothing could excuse his attempt on my life, I was concerned for his situation. In a few days, however, he put a final period to my sentiments in his favour.

“ He wrote me a most scurrilous and taunting letter, in which he informed me, he had discovered the retreat wherein *I* had placed Olivia, and that she was at length safe in *his* power; and as she was unworthy to become his wife, he would certainly make her his mistress. He concluded with ridiculing me for supposing him my dupe, and vowing to take the most horrible vengeance for my treachery.

“ This letter I considered, at the time, as the mad effusion of a man disappointed in his dearest hopes; and until this day, by some wonderful fatality, it has never crossed
my

my recollection. Oh! had my memory once reverted to the circumstances I have just related, my Adelaide and my son might still have blest my arms. Oh, my father! can you pardon the wretch who has proved himself so careless of such inestimable treasures?"

Agonizing remembrances tore the almost broken heart of Di Romanzini, and his regrets were so violent, that, when the servants announced that every thing was ready for his departure, he appeared so disordered and indisposed, that, anxious as was the Duke for the apprehension of Spignola, yet he could not endure the idea of the Marchese's departing in such a situation; but all his entreaties could not alter the resolves of Di Romanzini, who, eager to avenge the losses he had sustained, would not admit of a moment's delay; and regardless of the representations of his noble and affectionate relative, he immediately departed.

CHAP. V.

THE Marchese had been absent about a week, when the Duke and his domestics were thrown into consternation by the flight of Sebastian.

No precaution had been omitted to prevent his escape, and the man had seemed pleased at the vigilance of those that attended on him, and never discovered the least inclination to elude it.

He had, however, artfully contrived to remove the bars of his window, and let himself down by the bed-clothes; but how he had crossed the high walls of the castle courts, was a mystery that no person could elucidate.

elucidate. That point appeared so difficult, that the Duke imagined he might still be in some remote part of the vast edifice; but the most minute search served only to convince him of the contrary.

This circumstance filled the mind of the Duke with indescribable alarm. It was now certain that Sebastian was a complete villain; and the Duke, with apparent reason, trembled for the life of the Marchese, to whom he immediately dispatched messengers with this disagreeable intelligence, and also to warn him of the apprehended danger. Meanwhile the rest of the domestics, assisted by the peasantry, scoured the country for many miles round, in the hope of once more securing Sebastian; but at length returned without having met with the wished-for success.

The messenger overtook the Marchese before he had reached the Venetian state; but the intelligence he conveyed did not prevent Di Romanzini from pursuing his journey to Padua, at which place he learned

that the Signor Spignola had actually flown from his house, at the time Sebastian had mentioned, having first discharged all his servants, and privately disposed of all his possessions. Every attempt to trace his route from thence proved fruitless.

After several days spent in these unsuccessful enquiries, the Marchese left Padua, and journeyed again to Naples, where, prior to his proceeding to the above place, he had made every possible enquiry: in vain he now repeated them: he could gain no intelligence whatever respecting Spignola, who seemed to be totally unknown. The Marchese at length returned to the castle, fatigued and disappointed. The flight of Sebastian confirmed Di Romanzini in an opinion that Vivonio was actually no more: the Duke and Father Benvolio entertained the same idea; for they could not but attribute the escape of the man to the fright he must naturally have experienced, on reflecting that, should all be discovered, he, as well as his sanguinary employer,

employer, would be sacrificed to the just vengeance of the Marchese, who would undoubtedly not suffer the murderers of his wife and son to escape with impunity.

Notwithstanding every measure in the least likely to lead to the discovery of the author of the black transactions which had ruined the peace of the Duke's once happy family was, for a considerable length of time, indefatigably pursued, such were the precautions taken to elude justice, that all attempts to trace Spignola and Sebastian proved of no effect.

About a year after the disappearance of the young Vivonio, the family at the castle had to lament the sudden death of the good Father Benvolio. The information of this melancholy event was communicated to the Marchese by Father Albertini, a young monk of the same order, who had taken the vows a few months prior to the decease of Benvolio, by whom he had been introduced to the Duke, as a man possessed of inestimable virtues and unfeigned piety.

A very

A very short intercourse with Albertini had not failed to convince both the Duke and the Marchese, that Father Benvolio had only done justice to his virtues. Albertini, though known to practise with unceasing zeal all the austerities of his order, was nevertheless kind, gentle, and humane to every child of sorrow : his story was unknown to all, yet he was universally respected ; and, while it was evident that some deep affliction internally preyed upon his heart, the placid mildness of his manner proved, that the feelings of the man yielded to the pious resignation of the saint.

The society of the virtuous Father Albertini was now become so pleasing to the Duke and the Marchese, that each soon felt for him those sentiments of friendship and esteem with which they had distinguished Father Benvolio ; but such was the humility of Albertini, that, though he possessed extraordinary talents, joined to profound erudition, he would never listen to the offers of the Duke to procure for him

high ecclesiastical dignities. With ardour he expressed heartfelt gratitude for the repeated proofs of friendship he received, while with meek lowliness of mind he declined those eminent distinctions, which would have conferred on him honour and wealth.

To this amiable friend, the Marchese was indebted for the resignation and serenity which now filled his bosom. The contemplation of the heavenly bliss enjoyed by his sainted Adelaide, almost banished the grief and despair he had suffered for her loss, while his sorrow for the fate of his Vivonio was softened by beholding in his lovely little Rosalia every promise of perfection.

CHAP. VI.

MONTHS and years rolled away, every succeeding day of which had developed some new beauty of mind and person in the lovely Rosalia, who, with all the enchanting graces of early youth, possessed a heart gifted by Heaven with every virtuous propensity: gentle—almost to timidity—feelingly alive to the sorrows of others, her own conduct was regulated by the dread of giving pain. With uncommon sensibility she repeatedly evinced that she possessed a fortitude beyond her years, which always enabled her to relinquish, without regret, her own little enjoyments, when

when incompatible with the ease or convenience of others.

Though almost idolized by the nuns and the virtuous Madre Santa Clara, yet the latter, too well knowing that no situation in life, however prosperous or exalted, is exempt from disappointment and some degree of care, wisely exacted from her lovely pupil many little sacrifices, with a view to prepare her for those she might possibly be forced to make in the world.

The Abbess, though strictly devoted to the religion of the holy mother church, possessed none of its severity ; her charity extended to the unenlightened heathen, and the erring heretic—and, while they frequently experienced her benevolent assistance, her prayers were fervently offered up for their conversion.

Rosalia early imbibed sentiments of love and pity towards her fellow-creatures ; and while her youthful bosom heaved with sighs for the miseries of sinful mortals, her innate purity caused her to turn with horror
and

and dismay from the cruelty and vices that overrun the world—for the histories of martyred saints convinced her, that man was cruel, ambitious, deceitful, and a slave to his passions.

With emotions of rapture, such as a parent alone can feel or comprehend, the Marchese daily surveyed his beauteous child, who tenderly repaid his affection with the liveliest sentiments of filial love and veneration, while the good old Duke fancied he beheld *his Adelaide* rising from childhood, and charming him with her innocent smiles and artless affection.

The rank and fortune of this lovely girl never deterred her from performing the tender offices of Christian humility. The young Rosalia, attending the couch of an almost dying sister, appeared a celestial being, administering consolation and assistance.

The Marchese finding her in tears one day, after she had been attending a nun who was on the point of expiring, represented,

sented, that such scenes might produce an habitual melancholy in her.

“ Ah no, my father !” replied the amiable girl—“ sister Serina has been praying that I may long enjoy the blessings I now possess ; and she has so feelingly delineated my happiness, that these tears proceed from love and gratitude to the Divine Author of it. What an affectionate mother I possess in my beloved and revered Santa Clara ! and you, my father !—Who is so blest in a parent as I am ? Yet do I not call *two* of the most amiable and best of men—fathers ? am I not surrounded by hearts devoted to me ? and has not the Divine Disposer of events blessed me also with health, and a heart fervently inclined to assist the unhappy ? Shall I not then, in obedience to his Omnipotent command, visit the sick and sorrowful in their afflictions ? No, my father, these visits only teach me humility and compassion ; they will not unfit me to partake of those innocents delights which are permitted to the good.”

Such

Such was Rosalia at the age of thirteen, as eminently distinguished for her piety and virtues, as for her exquisite beauty.

Those who gaze with elevated transports on a pious, a dutiful, and lovely child, will conceive what the parents of Rosalia experienced.

She did, indeed, promise to become as perfect as mortal can be. A young female, with amiable dispositions, well instructed in the moral duties of Christianity, can scarcely fail of becoming an ornament to her sex; and to this task Santa Clara was fully competent; for she knew and taught, that the outward observance of religion must be accompanied by inward purity, and the practice of every moral virtue. The Convent of Santa Maria was, therefore, famed throughout Italy for the superior benevolence and the irreproachable conduct of its fair inhabitants.

Rosalia scarcely ever quitted the convent, but on the annual returns of her natal day, which was always celebrated at the castle with uncommon rejoicings.

Uncommon!

Uncommon! for on that day the poor, the infirm, and the aged, assembled in the ancient halls of the castle, to receive, from their young and beautiful patroness, the liberal gifts of Plenty dispensed by the hand of Innocence. A few select friends formed the party of the Duke and Marchese: this chosen set knew how to appreciate the worth of the amiable inhabitants of the castle, and to look with the eyes of rapture on the blooming Rosalia, who read in their approving smiles their sentiments of her conduct; for the Marchese suffered not the voice of adulation to influence or corrupt the heart of his adored child. The very objects of her bounty durst only whisper prayers for her felicity—these prayers were Rosalia's rich reward; for she knew that the grateful *blessings* of the *indigent* are recorded in the *sacred volumes* of *immortality*.

Late in the evening of the day on which her thirteenth year was celebrated, just after the guests had departed, the unexpected

pected arrival of the Count Alvania, his lady, their son, and a few attendants, threw the peaceful inhabitants of the castle again into motion.

With surprise and pleasure the Duke received his beloved nephew, after an absence of nearly eighteen years. The Marchese endeavoured, by the warmth of his reception, to express the friendship and affection he entertained for the relative of his lamented Adelaide; while the Count, with agitation and pleasure, returned his polite and friendly compliments.

In the Countess Alvania, both the Duke and Marchese beheld a model of grace and beauty; and the unconstrained and interesting gaiety of her manners rendered her peculiarly charming.

The Count received many compliments on the excellence of his taste, and the beauty of his lady; nor were less encomiums bestowed on the youthful Ferdinand, who was then about sixteen, and whose interesting and amiable manners immediately engaged

engaged the affectionate regard of the Duke and Di Romanzini.

The Countess appeared charmed with Rosalia, who, with inimitable grace and sweetness, congratulated herself on the happiness she experienced in beholding the valued friends of her beloved parents.

Ferdinand had no eyes for any thing but his beautiful cousin—never had he beheld one so interestingly lovely, or so gracefully simple. The Count, confused and agitated, after addressing a few incoherent compliments to Rosalia, retired to a distant part of the saloon, to conceal the emotion which the lovely girl's exact resemblance to the Marchesa had excited.

“ You seem affected, my dear Count,” said the Duke, who had observed his surprise and agitation, and followed his steps; “ I am not surprised at your emotion. That lovely creature is, indeed, the express image of our lamented Adelaide; her mind, I assure you, is not inferior to her person; she

she is an angel; every feminine grace and——”

A deep sigh from the Count caused the Duke to stop; he perceived how much he had encreased the agitation of the former, therefore forbore to say any thing more on the subject. Turning from Alvanio, he joined the Countess and the Marchese, who were conversing on the merits of the youthful Ferdinand, to whom Rosalia was then describing the happiness she enjoyed when within the sacred walls of Santa Maria.

The remainder of the evening was passed in cheerfulness. The Count, who had recovered from his first feelings, now paid the most animated attentions to the charming Rosalia.

Upon the Duke expressing some surprise that the Count had not written to inform him of the happiness he had intended him in this visit, the latter replied, that he had found it impossible to ascertain the time on which he could leave Spain; but had it
not

not been so, he should have been extremely unwilling to give his illustrious relative the trouble of making any preparations on his account.

On the following morning, the Countess accompanied Rosalia to the Convent of Santa Maria. The Abbess was charmed with the former, whose sentiments she soon found were congenial with her own. From this period a friendship commenced between these amiable women, which terminated only with their lives.

Rosalia returned with the Countess to the castle, throughout which the presence of the unexpected and welcome guests had diffused an air of happiness.

In the sweet intercourse of refined friendship, two months had glided on, when the Count Alvanio proposed setting off for his new residence at Naples, where, during his stay at Orenza, every preparation had been made for the reception of himself and family. The Duke and Marchese, having vainly solicited him to remain awhile longer

at the castle, were at length compelled to acquiesce in his resolve.

On the morning preceding that fixed on for the Count's departure, the Duke joined him and the Marchese in the saloon, and, after some hesitation, said he had a proposition to make, which, should it meet with their approbation, would make the evening of his days happy.

Both the Marchese and the Count eagerly begged to be informed in what manner they could have the felicity of contributing to his happiness. The Duke, in reply, proposed the union of Ferdinand and Rosalia.

The Marchese and the Count were much surprised, and no less pleased, at this unexpected proposition of the Duke's. It was, therefore, quickly determined, that when Ferdinand had attained the age of twenty, and Rosalia that of seventeen, they should be united, provided their inclinations coincided with those of their parents.

“ We will conceal these intentions from
the

the young people," said the Duke, "as the idea of constraint might defeat our project. Ferdinand will have sufficient opportunities of conversing with our lovely Rosalia during his visits at the castle, which visits, I insist, may be frequent; and our beloved girl, even in the seclusion of the convent, will not fail to find leisure to contemplate the merits of her elegant cousin."

The prospect of this alliance communicated pleasure to the hitherto melancholy inmates of the castle; and the Countess and Santa Clara joined in the happiness of their noble relatives.

The Count and Countess now bade adieu to their respected friends; and the parting of Ferdinand and Rosalia was such as to encourage the hopes of their parents."

In vain the Count endeavoured to persuade the Marchese to pass a few days at his pallazo. No entreaties could induce the latter to quit the delightful shades of

Orenza, and the daily felicity of beholding his lovely daughter.

A few days after the departure of the Count and Countess Alvanio, the Duke was agreeably surprised by the return of Ferdinand, who appeared to prefer the charming society at the castle to all the luxury and splendour of the pàllazo.

Father Albertini was alone with the Duke at the return of Ferdinand, who was immediately conducted to the apartment. The Father was struck with his modest and sensible demeanour, so unlike the air and manners of a youth educated amidst the luxuries and follies of a great city ; but his wonder ceased when he understood that Ferdinand had chiefly resided at a remote estate of the Count's in Arragon, under the direction and care of a very pious and sensible man.

A few days acquaintance served to increase the mutual esteem of Father Albertini and the youthful Ferdinand ; and the
former,

former, finding the youth rather deficient in some branches of knowledge of which he was perfect master, undertook to instruct him.

The talents and erudition of Father Albertini amply qualified him for the pleasing task he had imposed on himself; and Ferdinand exceeded his instructor's expectations, in the sweetness of his temper, and the facility with which he acquired the knowledge of whatever he was instructed in.

In the Convent of Santa Maria, Ferdinand was an universal favourite. The Madre regarded him as a youth who promised to become perfectly deserving of her beautiful Rosalia; while the nuns pronounced him the most polite and amiable Chevalier in the world. His charming cousin beheld him with all the artless affection of her early age.

After an absence of two months, Ferdinand returned to Naples, where the Countess anxiously expected him. His

improvement was so evident, that the Count remarked it on the second day after his return ; and Ferdinand had now an opportunity of expatiating, with animated delight, on the merits of the virtuous Father Albertini.

The Count expressed an earnest wish to see this good Father ; but was informed that the Father Albertini had a decided aversion to much society, and had even declined the being introduced to the father of his pupil.

Three years glided away, unmarked by aught but the increasing improvement of the lovely cousins, in goodness, beauty, and accomplishments, and in the continued friendship of their noble relatives, who ardently looked forward to the approaching year, which was to unite their Ferdinand and Rosalia.

CHAP. VII.

THE young Alvanio had now attained his nineteenth year. The pallid cheek of Albertini was animated by the glow of virtuous exultation, as he beheld the youth he had trained in the paths of religion and honour, an ornament to his rank and family.

Rosalia, now sixteen, was exquisitely beautiful; and her personal charms were heightened by the modest grace and elegance of her deportment. Innate delicacy diffused a heavenly softness over her lovely face and form, such as the most consummate libertine could not behold without

experiencing the full power of real virtue. No affected airs of sensibility, no studied attitudes, were ever thought of or practised by this enchanting female: her truly feeling and elevated mind gave a graceful dignified simplicity to all her actions, which the most refined art would vainly endeavour to imitate.

During every visit the Count and Countess Alvanio had made to the Duke and Marchese, Rosalia was of the party, and the attachment of the young cousins appeared unabated, when suddenly Ferdinand began to pass more time at the pallazo at Naples, than was agreeable to the Count or the Marchese. The Duke, indeed, saw nothing particular in a fine young man wishing to mix in the gaiety and splendour of the pallazo; but the Count was of a different opinion, and he always took care to hasten his son's return to the castle; but even then the visits of Ferdinand were short, and he soon again presented himself at Naples.

The Duke, at length, growing chagrine

at

at this change, requested Father Albertini to question Ferdinand respecting his motive for visiting Naples so frequently ; but the Father could only learn from his pupil, that a wish of paying more attention to his mother influenced his present conduct.

Ferdinand gave this reason with so much embarrassment, that Albertini, with extreme concern, began to fear he no longer possessed the confidence of his beloved young friend : but the Duke, on hearing the motive Ferdinand had assigned for his absence, made such enquiries as confirmed the truth ; for he learned, with much satisfaction, that Ferdinand constantly attended the Countess with all the amiable assiduity of filial regard ; that he seldom frequented any parties but her's ; and when she was not engaged, he passed the time in reading to her, in her boudoir or her dressing-room.

This account entirely reinstated the young man in the esteem of his friends ; and as the Countess did not enjoy excellent health,

this proof of an amiable disposition in her son, obtained for him the highest encomiums.

The Count Alvania, however, was extremely restless and unhappy ; he durst not forbid his son's frequent visits to the Countess, and the idea of his being absent from Rosalia so often was painful and displeasing.

At last he requested the Duke would permit the young people to be informed of their intended alliance, that they might not enter into any engagements contrary to the wishes of their friends ; but the Duke smiled at this idea, and protested that it was too soon.

The Count was hurt ; but he suppressed the expression of his apprehensions, and soon revisited the castle, accompanied by the Countess, who now used such arguments and entreaties, that the Marchese, though reluctantly, consented that his idolized child should accompany her to Naples, for a few weeks.

The

The Countess represented, that the mind of the lovely girl ought to be unprejudiced in her union with Ferdinand.—“ Hitherto she had seen only him ; he appeared therefore the most amiable being in the world. Suffer our beloved Rosalia,” continued the Countess, “ to associate in the world some time prior to her marriage ; her mind will then be unbiassed, and should she then honour my son with her regard, we may rest assured of her felicity.”

This proposal was extremely pleasing to the benevolent Santa Clara. She declared her approbation in the most decided manner, and the Marchese no longer hesitated.

The amiable Abbess doubted the affection of Rosalia for Ferdinand. The innocent and lovely girl, she had observed, regarded her cousin only with the mild affection of a sister ; and Santa Clara had eagerly availed herself of this opportunity of ascertaining the justness of her own observations.

Rosalia was as unhappy at the idea of this journey as the Marchese, and, in tears,

besought him not to persist in the intended visit to Naples; for Di Romanzini had determined to accompany his daughter thither: but the entreaties of Rosalia were in vain; the Duke, justly partial to the Countess, could not endure that her request should be refused.

Preparations were accordingly made for this excursion, and in a few days Rosalia bade adieu to Santa Clara, and her amiable companions, who wept the departure of their lovely inmate from the sacred walls of Santa Maria.

Fearful of depressing the spirits of her beloved father, Rosalia endeavoured to restrain those tears, which the prospect of a lengthened absence from the tranquil abode of her early youth had caused to flow. The Marchese appeared but too much inclined to melancholy, which Rosalia perceiving, soon resumed her sweetest smiles, to assist the Countess in the pleasing task of banishing his griefs.

As they approached the charming city
of

of Naples, a deep sadness shaded the countenance of the Marchese; nor could the interesting remarks of his amiable companion divert his attention from dwelling on scenes long past.

When they arrived at the pallazo, they found the Count anxiously awaiting their appearance. Ferdinand, who had not been apprised of the Countess's intentions, received the Marchese and Rosalia with such animated expressions of surprise and pleasure, that the suspicions of the Count entirely subsided, and the Marchese was confirmed in his opinion that the apprehensions of Alvanio were groundless.

A residence of a few days, however, taught the Countess otherwise. She discerned no striking trait of that passion which constitutes the felicity of marriage.

Ferdinand, she knew, must reasonably suppose that several obstacles existed to his obtaining the hand of Rosalia; consequently, if he beheld her with sentiments of love, his fears would produce embarrass-

ment and sorrow; but his conduct was free and unconstrained; and he was already planning a thousand pleasureable schemes for the amusement of Rosalia, which would not fail of introducing her to the notice of many of the most noble youths of Naples, who were but too likely to become his rivals.

These reflections convinced the Countess that her son viewed Rosalia only as a beloved sister. Of Signora di Romanzini's sentiments, she had long formed a decided opinion.

As it was late when the party reached Naples, Rosalia, after partaking a slight repast, retired to her apartment, attended by a servant who had accompanied her from the convent. This young woman was the niece of the late Marchesa's favourite attendant, Lauretta: she was not many years older than her young lady, and having resided constantly in the convent with Rosalia, she was, at the request of her Lady, permitted to accompany her to
Naples.

Naples. She was remarkable only for the unbounded affection she bore her Lady, the excellence of her heart, and the simplicity of her manners. Her attendance was therefore extremely pleasing, particularly as it superseded the necessity of requiring the service of strangers, for Rosalia would not permit more than one servant to wait at her toilet.

CHAP. VIII.

ON the morrow, Rosalia had leisure to contemplate the luxury and elegance with which the pallazo was adorned. Every thing magnificent, ornamental, and convenient, that the most fastidious could desire, was here to be met with in profusion ; but the taste of Rosalia was formed, and the simple elegance of her apartments in the castle, and the sublime prospects which her chamber in the convent afforded, were preferred to the brilliant and splendid residence of the Countess.

With eyes filled with tears of paternal rapture, the Marchese heard these sentiments,

ments, and gloried in the thought that his child was alike qualified to shine in the most brilliant circles, as in all the soft enchanting scenes of domestic elegance and retirement.

For two days the Countess shut her doors on all visitors. On the third, a magnificent entertainment was given, for the purpose of introducing the lovely Rosalia di Romanzini to the society she was so eminently formed to adorn by her beauty and accomplishments.

In the midst of an assemblage of the most distinguished beauties, Rosalia appeared conspicuously lovely; she exceeded all expectation, and even the beauteous Italian dames confessed Signora di Romanzini to be unrivalled.

In a short time all Naples rang with the charms of the lovely heiress of Orenza.

The Marchese, with silent joy and wonder, beheld the fair object of universal admiration still the same sweet, simple, feeling

feeling girl. By no means elated by the enthusiastic raptures she excited, Rosalia considered them as merely the flatteries that every young female of rank received on her first entrance on the busy scenes of the gay world ; and though her lovely face was frequently covered with blushes, they were not the glow of gratified vanity, but the delicate expression of modesty and sense.

The Count, with inconceivable chagrin, perceived that the unbounded admiration which Rosalia excited, appeared not to give the slightest degree of pain to Ferdinand, who, on the contrary, seemed highly pleased at the uncommon *eclat* his fair cousin had obtained.

Repeated solicitations to the Marchese, for permission to address his incomparable daughter, were now unavoidably rejected ; and Di Romanzini became anxious to leave Naples, to shield himself from the urgent entreaties he daily encountered on that subject ;

subject ; for as yet he did not avow that he had destined the hand of Rosalia to the young Ferdinand Alvanio.

The Countess was in the greatest concern at the idea of the Marchese's departure. She feared Naples had become disagreeable to him, and to prevent his return to the castle, prevailed on him to accompany her to an enchanting villa she possessed, situated near the bay of Gaita.

On the evening preceding their departure, the Countess and Rosalia were present at a ball given by the Viceroy, in honour of the lovely young stranger.

Here the same admiration attended her steps, and she received the complimentary adieus of the company with infinite grace and unembarrassed modesty, till the Count Guidoni approached ; a deeper blush then suffused her cheek, and she faltered her farewell in almost unintelligible accents.

The Countess at that moment addressed the Count Guidoni, and Rosalia, complaining of sudden indisposition, was soon surrounded

surrounded by a crowd, eager to display their assiduous attentions.

In a few moments she was tolerably recovered, and was attended to the carriage by the Marchese and Count Guidoni, who appeared exceedingly alarmed at her pallid look.

On arriving at the pallazo, Rosalia immediately retired to her apartment, accompanied by the Countess, who did not leave her till she was perfectly restored.

The Count Guidoni was the son of a Piedmontese nobleman, of an ancient and honourable family. His fortune was large, and he possessed no vices to degrade his rank, or dissipate his wealth. His father had lately paid the debt of nature; his mother he lost in his infancy; and having no near relation to console him for the loss of an indulgent and revered parent, he was now travelling, to divert his mind from the retrospect of the happy hours he had passed, when listening to the pious and noble precepts of the late Count, whose
valued

valued society had comprised his chief happiness.

The late Count Guidoni, from some early misfortunes, had become disgusted with the world, and in the secluded retirement of an ancient castle, proudly rearing its lofty towers amidst the Alpine scenery, which almost surrounded it, he had educated his only son.

Enrico Guidoni early imbibed the noble and romantic sentiments of his father, and his ardent love of virtue shone forth in a thousand different traits. No danger, no difficulty, even in his childhood, prevented Enrico from leaping the Alpine heights, to guide the lonely traveller to the hospitable gates of the castle. There, as the chilled features of the way-worn wanderer relaxed, while seated by the bright blaze that illumed the ample hearth, the tear of pleasure started in young Guidoni's eye, and his guileless lips breathed a prayer of thanksgiving to the Divine Being, who had graciously

ciously been pleased to place him in a situation to assist the unfortunate.

As Enrico grew up, he justly fulfilled the hopes of his anxious parent, who beheld him, at the age of twenty, possessed of every noble and endearing quality. His sublime principles of religion promised to guard him from the vicious illurements of the world; and his cultivated and refined understanding taught him to seek, in piety and virtue, for every real happiness.

At the age of eighteen, his father had accompanied him through several countries of Europe, with the instructive lessons of a tutor, and the tender care of a parent.

Under the discriminating and watchful eye of this virtuous parent, Guidoni beheld the world as it is. Its vices were exposed to his view, with all the candour and judgment that marked the character of the old Count. He did not severely inveigh against such and such pursuits; he pointed out their consequences, in the unchanging colours

colours of truth ; and Enrico soon became convinced that man may, if he does not take religion and reason for his guides, degrade himself below the brute creation.

After three years, devoted to the pursuit of useful knowledge, the Count and his son were returning to Guidoni Castle, previous to passing a winter at Rome, when the Count was taken suddenly ill, and died at Milan, after a few days severe illness. He died enforcing the precepts he had so long taught, and in calling down eternal blessings on a son so beloved and so deserving.

For some time the young Count was a prey to silent sorrow. He attended the remains of his lamented father to Guidoni Castle, and when they were deposited in the chapel, he shut himself up in his apartment, to weep his irreparable loss.

At length, religion aided the recovery of his tranquillity : he remembered that his beloved parent had forbade useless regret ; and though he could not immediately obey this command, he determined to make the
endeavour,

endeavour, and at the entreaties of a valued and confidential old servant of the late Count's, commenced a tour of Italy.

After viewing every thing worthy his attention in several of the Italian States, the Count proceeded to Naples, where he had resided near two months antecedent to the visit of the Marchese and Rosalia to the pallazo Alvanio.

The Count, soon after his arrival, commenced an acquaintance with Ferdinand Alvanio, and early became his most valued friend. Enrico and Ferdinand seemed to have found in each other kindred souls, and were inseparable.

Long accustomed to listen to the praises bestowed on Rosalia, Guidoni ardently embraced the first opportunity of beholding the lovely relative of his friend; and he had no sooner beheld her, than he confessed she was superior to any female he had ever seen.

But when, afterwards, admitted to the private concerts and parties of the Countess, Guidoni

Guidoni conversed with Rosalia, he became devoted to her loved idea, and sought every occasion of paying her all those delicate attentions which a sincere love ever inspires.

The youthful Rosalia beheld in the Count Guidoni, on his first introduction, a young nobleman equally amiable and engaging as her beloved cousin ; a very few interviews served to convince her he was superior. His graceful air, the perfect symmetry of his elegant figure, and a countenance in which manly beauty and expression were conspicuous, rendered him a most interesting object ; and Rosalia indulged the artless predilection she had conceived in his favour, till she became insensible to the merits of any other.

The Countess, also, was particularly struck with the Count Guidoni, and he regarded her with that deference and respect her rank and virtues laid claim to. On a more intimate acquaintance, he esteemed her more ; and the mother of his friend was

soon considered as his own ; for the Countess, desirous to encrease the friendship that subsisted between the Count Guidoni and Ferdinand, frequently addressed the former by the endearing appellation of son.

As Rosalia was continually surrounded by a crowd of adorers, all assiduously courting her attention, the Count Guidoni was not particularly noticed. The timid forbearance of a real passion suffered him not to intrude his attentions ; and Rosalia was too innately delicate to permit her to distinguish him from the rest who strove to obtain her favour. No person, therefore, except the Countess and Ferdinand, suspected their mutual partiality ; but they did not even mention their suspicions to each other.

The embarrassment of Rosalia on the night of the ball, confirmed the suspicions of the Countess, and the alarm and terror of Guidoni were but too ill disguised to escape her penetration. The Count Alvania
had

had also made his observations on the behaviour of the young Count: he had remarked how, on hearing Rosalia complain of indisposition, the noble youth had flown to support her; while the death-like paleness that overspread his fine countenance, and his hurried accent, but too well declared that no common feelings agitated his breast.

The Marchese was too much alarmed to perceive any thing, but that his lovely daughter was near fainting; and when Guidoni had assisted in leading her to the carriage, and afterwards attended at the pallazo, anxiously entreating to be informed of her health, the Marchese was profuse in his acknowledgments, and treated the young Count with such polite and friendly courtesy, that Guidoni departed, mingling blessings on Di Romanzini with his prayers for the perfect restoration of the charming Rosalia.

CHAP. IX.

ON the morning which succeeded the evening of the ball, the Count and Countess, accompanied by the Marchese and Rosalia, and attended by a small suite, set off for the villa, Ferdinand being to remain a few days longer in Naples.

The sublime and beautiful views surrounding the villa, charmed and delighted Rosalia; and the elegant simplicity of the structure was perfectly congenial to her taste.

A slight colonnade of white marble adorned the front entrance, which overlooked the bay; while groves of the finest myrtles and
orange

orange trees, intermingled with almond and rose trees, partly encompassed the edifice.

The apartments, designed for the use of Rosalia, had been newly fitted up. Every decoration that the Countess had heard her approve, was here arranged with exquisite taste; and the lovely girl felt truly sensible of this delicate attention.

These apartments commanded the most beautiful and extensive views; and Rosalia, from the window of a small boudoir, surveyed the luxuriant plains, covered with vineyards and olives, while the blue waters of the bay undulated on the sloping shore. Just beneath the windows of her dressing-room and chamber, the fragrant orange blossomed, and the dark myrtle shaded a serpentine walk cut through the grove, and leading to an eminence, on which was erected a small temple, that commanded several romantic and delightful views of the surrounding country and the bay.

On the evening of their arrival, as the party had experienced no great fatigue, the

Count detained the Marchese and Rosalia till a late hour, while music and conversation insensibly beguiled the time.

When Rosalia retired to her chamber, she found Biancha eagerly awaiting her appearance in her dressing-room, and on enquiring the cause of her apparent agitation, the girl was preparing to answer, when the sweet tones of a flute, breathed with exquisite skill, checked her utterance.

Rosalia listened attentively, as the thrilling cadence died upon the breeze, then swelled to strains of celestial harmony, and sunk to the soft plaintive notes of hopeless love.

She now gently approached the lattice, and unclosed it. The night was serene and beautiful: the moon shed a silver lustre on the dark branches of the myrtle, and the most delightful perfume was wafted from the orange and rose trees.

Again the strain stole on her ear; her heart beat quicker. A favourite air, which she had frequently sung at Naples, was
gently

gently breathed with such taste and sweetness, as charmed her to the spot.

“ Ah !” sighed Rosalia, “ surely it is the Count Guidoni ! he only could express so much feeling !”

The idea had no sooner crossed her mind, than, conscious of the impropriety of remaining at the window, she hastily withdrew, and, ordering Biancha to fasten the lattice, retired to seek that repose which the image of Guidoni forbade.

Rosalia, though tenderly prepossessed in favour of the Count, was unconscious of the nature of the sentiment she indulged. Her agitation, on the night she bade him farewell at the palace of the Viceroy, had failed to inform her of the truth ; and she attributed to fatigue, and the natural consequence of separating from those we esteem, the strong emotion that had almost overpowered her.

On the following morning she arose, languid and pale, and on entering the parlour to breakfast, the anxious enquiries of the

Marchese and the Countess confused and distressed her almost to tears. Ashamed of this weakness, so unusual, she endeavoured to apologize and to excuse it, by saying she was indisposed; but a strict regard to truth would not permit her to persist in this tale, and she confessed she had not slept the preceding night, her mind having been so much occupied by the scenes she had been engaged in at Naples.

The Marchese smiled, and insisted that she must banish such trivial recollections; but the Countess, who justly imagined that the form of Guidoni stood foremost in these "*trivial recollections*," began to entertain very serious alarm for the peace of her beloved Rosalia.

With the intention of diverting the thoughts of the lovely girl from the interesting subject that engrossed them, the Countess conducted her to the little temple, and requested her to give such directions for its embellishment as accorded with her own taste.

Rosalia,

Rosalia, by no means sensible of the danger she incurred by dwelling long on an idea inimical to her peace, would have declined this employment; but the Countess seemed to attach so much consequence to her denial, that she was obliged to submit, and accordingly commenced forming a plan for the decoration of the temple.

But the humane design of the Countess was entirely frustrated by the passion that occupied the heart of Rosalia. Such a stile of ornament had been praised by Guidoni. The pencil of Rosalia immediately sketched that. He would have arranged festoons of myrtle and roses between the light pillars. She now gave orders for the temple to be adorned with festoons of roses and myrtle. In short, while the Countess congratulated herself on having, in some degree, diverted the thoughts of Rosalia from a fascinating object, the contemplation of whose merits might prove fatal to her happiness, the lovely subject of her cares was earnestly employed in decorating

the temple with every ornament that could remind her of Guidoni.

In a short time the improvements were compleated, and Rosalia was incessantly wandering to the favourite spot, and cherishing the idea of Guidoni, by touching her lute to every air she had heard him admire.

Though she never more approached the window at night, yet she never neglected to listen for the enchanting musician ; but he returned no more, and melancholy regret clouded the brilliant prospects of Rosalia.

In the presence of the Marchese alone, Rosalia retained any resemblance of her former self ; in the society of her beloved parent, she resolutely endeavoured to repress all ideas but those of pleasing him ; and this affectionate parent knew not that his heart's best treasure was the innocent, unconscious victim of a passion that could end but with her life.

About a week after their arrival at the
villa,

villa, several friends of the Countess joined her. Their converse and the amusements changed the scene ; but the heart of Rosalia was still the same. She partook of the gaieties of the villa ; but her soul revolted at the name of pleasure, and a pensive moonlight walk accorded better with the feelings of her mind.

One night, soon after the family had retired to repose, a messenger arrived in the greatest haste, and requested to see the Marchese, who was awakened as cautiously as possible, and having ordered the messenger to be admitted into his chamber, found he was one of his own servants, who had travelled with the greatest expedition, to request the Marchese and the Count Alvanio's immediate attendance at the Castle di Orenza, as the Duke had been taken suddenly ill, and was not expected to survive two days.

The Marchese instantly caused the Count to be informed of this summons. Alvanio quickly sought the chamber of Di Roman-

zini, who was preparing for departure, and, at his request, hastened to the Countess, and briefly informing her of the circumstance, requested she would break the affair to Rosalia, whom neither the Marchese nor the Count would permit to be disturbed.

The servant having brought one of his Lord's travelling carriages and swift horses, with a train of attendants, well armed, the Count delayed not a moment, but stepped into the carriage with the Marchese; and they were several miles on the road ere Rosalia arose.

On hearing the occasion of the Marchese's departure, Rosalia could scarcely be restrained from following him. Her own secret sorrows were totally forgotten in the situation of the Duke, and she passed two days in agonizing suspense. On the third, the joyful intelligence arrived, of the Duke's being pronounced out of danger. The Marchese, in a letter replete with sentiments of paternal love, addressed to Rosalia, entreated his beloved child to console herself

herself in his absence with the idea of his administering to the ease and happiness of the Duke; and concluded with repeated promises of returning as speedily as possible to conduct her to the castle.

She had scarcely finished reading the affectionate epistle of the Marchese, when the Count Guidoni was announced. The letter fell from her trembling hand, and she had scarcely power to rise on his entrance.

The Count, surprised and alarmed at her evident confusion, apologized for his intrusion, and would have withdrawn, had not Rosalia, recovering from her first emotion, gracefully entreated him to remain, and accounted for her agitation, by informing him of the recent situation of the Duke.

The Countess now entered the saloon, and gave a very flattering reception to the Count, who acquainted her that Ferdinand intended to make his appearance at the villa on the following morning, and had made him the bearer of his excuses for not attending earlier.

The Countess, on the departure of Count Alvanio, had sent to Ferdinand, requiring his presence ; but, to her extreme surprise, he had not yet obeyed the summons, and she was on the point of dispatching another messenger, when the arrival of the Count Guidoni rendered such a step unnecessary.

Convinced that the Count adored Rosalia, the Countess inwardly rejoiced at this visit : an explanation, she hoped, would now ensue, which would lead to the completion of their happiness. Much as she had wished the union of Ferdinand and Rosalia, her generous mind could not endure the idea of beholding the misery that must ever result from a marriage of which mutual affection is not the basis.

The attentions of the Count Guidoni to Rosalia, therefore, gave no more pain to the Countess than they did to Ferdinand. That amiable lady felt assured that the Marchese would not withhold his approbation of the wish of his beloved and only child ; and the character of Guidoni was such as
could

could not fail to interest the Marchese, who already esteemed him an ornament to human nature. The Countess was not fully aware of the encreasing anxiety that tormented the Count Alvania, who had resolved to use every entreaty, could the Duke be discoursed with on the subject, to obtain his consent, and that of the Marchese, to the almost immediate solemnization of the nuptials of his son, and the beautiful heiress of Orenza.

On the arrival of the Marchese and the Count Alvania at the castle, they found the Duke just pronounced out of danger; and in a few days his recovery was considered as certain.

To the great joy of the Count, the Duke was as earnest in wishing to forward the nuptials of Rosalia, as he was himself; and the Marchese acquiesced with heartfelt satisfaction. It was therefore decided, that as soon as the Duke should be able to leave his chamber, the Count should return to the villa, and inform the young cousins of
the

the intended alliance ; and so energetic had the Count been in his representations of the continued affection of Ferdinand and Rosalia, that the Duke imagined this intelligence would afford them the most rapturous joy. The Marchese, entertaining no idea that his daughter had beheld any one of the young noblemen who had crowded around her with sentiments such as she experienced for Guidoni, was also of opinion that the communication the Count was about to make, would only be productive of happiness.

While the Count Alvanio impatiently awaited the convalescence of the Duke, the Countess and Rosalia, attended by Guidoni and Ferdinand, were wandering on the sea-beat shore, or through the myrtle groves of the villa, unconscious of the threatening storm.

CHAP. X.

THE situation of the Duke prevented the Countess entertaining visitors at the villa during his indisposition ; therefore the Count Guidoni resided at Gaita, from whence he rode to the villa every morning, the intimacy which subsisted between Ferdinand and the Count allowing the latter to present himself when other society was excluded.

Ferdinand had been true to his appointment ; but the Countess, soon after his arrival, observed that an air of melancholy and abstraction frequently clouded his features, and on privately enquiring what had

had occasioned his evident disquiet, she received an answer by no means satisfactory. A fearful dread of having formed an erroneous opinion respecting her son's sentiments towards Rosalia, threw the mind of the Countess into sorrow and perplexity, and her alarmed fancy portrayed Ferdinand struggling with the mingled emotions of concealed love and despair.

Deeply impressed with these apprehensions, the Countess strictly observed the actions of Ferdinand; but her usual penetration was now of no avail. The melancholy of Ferdinand encreased. She often caught his eyes earnestly fixed on the Count Guidoni and Rosalia, as they sat beneath the shade conversing, or as the latter attentively listened to the expressive accents of the Count, as he read, or recited the most admired authors. Yet Ferdinand still regarded the Count with sentiments of the liveliest friendship, and appeared to encourage his passion for Rosalia, by affording him every opportunity of paying her
those

those interesting attentions which render a lover so amiable.

While the Countess and her son were equally unhappy, though neither knew the cause of the other's distress, Rosalia and the Count, tenderly engrossed by each other, were insensible to every thing but the mutual desire of pleasing. The rose again bloomed on the cheek of Rosalia, and the sweet tranquillity of her mind shone in her eyes. Guidoni, alone, conscious of the sentiment that reigned in his breast, experienced the agonizing fear of losing her who was dearer to him than life.

In the presence of Rosalia, all his anxiety ceased; the rapture of hearing her voice, of gazing on her beautiful countenance, and watching her slightest wish, formed the joy of Guidoni, the supreme bliss of his existence. But, in the silence of night, while sighing on his couch, or wandering through the groves, all his terrors revived. Could he have dared to hope he was dear to her, he would instantly have
thrown

thrown himself at the feet of the Marchese, and confessed his ardent affection ; but the apprehension of being banished from her sight, the dread of not having gained an interest in her heart, deterred him ; for Guidoni possessed not that credulous vanity so common in young men of rank and personal attractions, which leads them to imagine that every young female must be sensible of their merits, and rejoice in their addresses. Guidoni had beheld Rosalia surrounded by some of the most amiable and accomplished cavaliers, had observed that she was insensible to their most animated assiduities—how then could he arrogate to himself the hope of creating an interest in the bosom of one for whom so many had sighed in vain ?

Had the innocent Rosalia suspected that love formed the charm of her existence, and that Guidoni was the favoured object of her heart, her confusion and timidity would have soon informed the Count of his happiness ; for to the fatal effects of that
passion,

passion, when imprudently indulged, the lovely girl was no stranger. Many of the pious inmates of Santa Maria had derived all their misfortunes from that source; and Rosalia had early learned to tremble at the thoughts of a young female devoted to an affection for one who might not be approved of by the authors of her being, or who, from his vices or situation, might be totally unworthy of regard.

Though Rosalia had often, with tears of pity, attended to the calamities produced by love, yet she had never heard the nature of that sentiment described, consequently she could not distinguish the illusions that darkened her own reason: her excellent understanding and refined education were of no service in revealing to herself the real state of her heart; and even now, while she distinguished the Count with chaste and virtuous affection, she imagined that she felt a superior friendship for him, because his merits were superior to those of almost all other men.

Guidoni

Guidoni was, indeed, worthy of her tenderest love. He was, like herself, pious, generous, humane, benevolent, a friend to virtue, and though he shunned and abhorred vice, he could sigh at the miseries of her votaries, and extend the hand of liberality to raise them from the abyss, and restore them to the paths of virtue.

Any other than Guidoni would have read, in the modest tenderness of Rosalia, that he was beloved. The Count, with all the diffidence of sincere affection, dared not entertain the idea.

The temple which Rosalia had adorned, was the beloved resort of Guidoni. There the melodious voice of her whom he adored, resounded through the embowering shade, while he gently breathed the accompaniment, fearful lest the soft instrument should deprive his enraptured ear of one harmonious tone.

Had the heart of the Countess been at ease, she would have beheld with delight the artless affection of Guidoni and Rosalia :

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The congeniality of their sentiments, alike innocent and noble—the incomparable beauty of their persons—their various accomplishments—their virtues—their amiable and interesting converse—all assured the Countess they could be happy only with each other.

A fortnight had now elapsed since the departure of the Marchese and Count Alvanio, when the latter suddenly returned alone. Not finding the Countess in the villa, he enquired after her, and understood she had walked towards the temple. The Count immediately bent his steps that way. As he drew nigh to the temple, the tones of a lute assured him of Rosalia being also there, and he was on the point of entering, when he beheld Count Guidoni leaning over her chair, and listening with silent rapture to her performance. The Countess sat at a small distance, pensively regarding them; but Ferdinand was not of the party. Surprise and anger prevented the Count entering, and he hastily returned to the villa,

villa, commanding his attendant to signify to the Countess his desire to see her immediately.

The approach of the Count Alvania had not been noticed; and the Countess and Rosalia were extremely surprised when the servant announced his return, and his wish to converse with his lady alone.

“ Ah! where is my beloved father?” exclaimed the terrified Rosalia.

“ The Marchese did not accompany my Lord, Signora,” replied the domestic.

“ Be composed, my beloved child,” cried the Countess; “ suffer me to attend the Count. Do not be thus alarmed. Perhaps the Duke would not permit the absence of the Marchese. In a few moments your anxiety will be relieved.”

Perceiving how much the Countess was distressed, Rosalia endeavoured to repress her emotion; but her pale looks and trembling form discovered how much she was affected.

Supported by the Countess and Guidoni,
whose

whose agitation equalled her own, Rosalia reached the colonnade, where the Count met them, and entirely dissipated the fears of the lovely girl, by assuring her of the health of the Marchese, and the perfect recovery of the Duke.

The Count's reception of Guidoni was coldly polite; and the latter concluding, from Alvanio's manner, that he wished to be alone with his family, bade the Countess and Rosalia adieu, and then departed, oppressed with the sad presentiment, that the few short hours of bliss he had enjoyed were fled for ever.

A thousand times he reproached himself for not having fallen at the feet of Rosalia and implored her pity. Yet, would that have been honourable, in the absence of the Marchese? No. The soul of Guidoni disdained the idea of soliciting the affections of a lovely young female, whose parent had not sanctioned his addresses.

With a mind torn by contending emotions, the Count suffered his horse to

proceed as the animal pleased, nor observed that he did not pursue the proper route.

The Count Alvanio was almost distracted at the intimacy which Guidoni appeared to have with his family, and severely reproached the Countess for her imprudence in permitting his visits. The Countess in vain endeavoured to excuse her conduct, by alledging, that it had long been her opinion that Ferdinand and Rosalia were not attached to each other by any other sentiments than those of friendship, and a regard such as might subsist between an affectionate brother and sister.

The Count was sensibly hurt at the assertions of his lady, and requested her not to admit the Count Guidoni on the following day, should he call at the villa. This the Countess reluctantly promised. The Count then informed her he had obtained the approbation of the Marchese and the Duke, for the immediate disclosure of their intention respecting the long-projected alliance, and that the former had
written

written to his daughter to enforce his wishes.—“ I bear a large packet for Rosalia,” continued the Count, “ but I do not think it proper to deliver it into her hands till I have considered in what manner I can put an end to the hopes of the Count Guidoni, and which I am inclined to believe will not be difficult, as you say he has not yet declared his sentiments to her. I certainly admire the Count, and I think he possesses too much honour to interrupt the designs of the Marchese, when he learns that the union of Ferdinand and Rosalia has been resolved on from their childhood.”

The Countess sighed, for she felt almost assured that this alliance would never take place; but had she been equally certain that the heart of Ferdinand would not be severely pained by the rejection of his hand, she would have rejoiced in the prospect which the termination of the Count's views opened to the hopes of Guidoni.

The Count now anxiously enquired for his son, who had been absent several hours,

but could not obtain any information respecting him ; he was therefore obliged to await patiently his return.

Ferdinand did not make his appearance till the family were just sitting down to supper. The faint animation that illumined his countenance, on perceiving the Count, soon yielded to the air of dejection which had of late pervaded his features. The Count observed his melancholy with pleasure ; for he attributed it to grief arising from the attentions which the Count Guidoni had imprudently been permitted to pay to the beautiful Rosalia.

At supper Rosalia made a thousand affectionate enquiries relative to the health of the Duke, and expressed the most earnest desire of obtaining permission to return to the castle. The Count assured her it was the wish of the Marchese that she should be conducted thither in a few days.

The sweet emotions of filial love added new lustre to the expressive eyes of the lovely girl, as she spoke her thanks to the
Count

Count for this pleasing intelligence, and as she anticipated the rapture of being folded in the arms of her revered parents, her Santa Clara, and the beloved companions of her early youth.

In the midst of the enchanting vision, the image of Guidoni intruded, and the brilliant glow that suffused her cheeks instantly fled—her eyes filled with tears—she immediately arose from her seat—attempted to apologize to the Count and Countess, and precipitately retired.

Astonishment and anger rivetted the Count to his seat, nor was the amazement of Ferdinand less. The Countess, who but too well defined the feelings of her beloved Rosalia, was grieved to the heart, and her deep sighs spoke her sympathy.

“ You will do well, Madam, to follow, and enquire into the cause of this sudden transition from joy to sorrow. Signora di Romanzini claims your attention,” cried the Count, with some asperity.

The Countess instantly obeyed. The

Count then commanded Ferdinand to remain in his own apartment on the following morning, till he should require his attendance.

Though extremely surprised at this mandate, Ferdinand immediately promised obedience.

“Retire to your apartments,” resumed the Count—“I will visit you as early as possible to-morrow; yet, should I delay beyond your expectation, still you must remain there. I request you will not admit any visitor; I prohibit even your friend the Count Guidoni. You are doubtless surprised at my conduct—a few days will explain the mystery. You may retire.”

Ferdinand withdrew, and the Count paced the saloon in much agitation, endeavouring to collect his ideas and arrange his plans.

CHAP. XI.

THE trembling Rosalia had no sooner entered her apartment, than she yielded to the sorrow that had almost overwhelmed her: emotions new and undescribable assailed her bosom; she found herself weeping at the idea of separating from one who was almost a stranger; a chilling horror stole over her heart; her faltering lips faintly pronounced the name of—*Love!*—and she fell senseless on her couch.

On recovering, she perceived herself in the arms of the Countess, who, pale and terrified, was calling on her name in accents of the mildest pity, while her attendant,

Biancha, was tremblingly administering restoratives.

Rosalia gazed for a moment on the tearful eyes of her beloved Countess, then hid her face, and again tears of bitter anguish bedewed her cheek.

As soon as the poor Biancha, who was almost distracted at the state of her adored lady, was prevailed on to withdraw, the Countess, with the most delicate and friendly remonstrances, succeeded in rendering the mind of Rosalia more composed.

“Exert that fortitude,” said the amiable Countess, “for which, my Rosalia, you have ever been approved. Child of my affection, I only am imprudent—I ought to have reflected on the probable consequences of introducing to your notice an object so interesting. Ah! do not grieve me by this excessive emotion. Speak to me, Rosalia—inform me, has the Count Guidoni explained his sentiments?”

The penetration of the Countess thrilled the soul of Rosalia; burning blushes crimsoned

soned her beautiful face, and the support of a noble pride succeeded to conquer her affliction.

“ No,” cried the lovely girl, interrupting the Countess, “ no, my revered friend, your Rosalia is not the degraded being you imagine—I have never been insulted by a tale of love, unsanctioned by a parent’s approbation. If, as I fear, my heart now feels the influence of that fatal sentiment, I am justly punished for my folly and presumption!

“ Ah! could I suppose it possible to behold and converse with the Count Guidoni, and remain insensible of his merits? You have been witness of the weakness that has disgraced me!—witness also my repentance, and fixed resolve of never more beholding the cause of my imprudence, unless a father commands me to receive him. Had I, my beloved, my almost mother, had I suspected my weakness, I would have instantly flown his presence, certain that

conscious rectitude would have supported me under the painful duty."

The Countess gazed on her with the highest admiration: the modest dignity of her manner, her sensibility and resolution, were equally charming; and the Countess indulged the pleasing hope that Rosalia, now convinced of her danger, would not fail to exert the noble firmness necessary to bear up beneath the arduous task of rendering the claims of love subservient to those of filial duty.

The affectionate attentions and fascinating sweetness of the Countess considerably tranquillized the mind of her lovely charge; and when, at a late hour, she arose to depart, Rosalia bade her good night, with a degree of composure that charmed this kind disinterested friend.

Biancha now attended, and expressed her joy at finding her dear lady so much recovered: she entreated permission to remain in the apartment during the night; but

but this Rosalia would not permit, and Biancha was soon dismissed.

When alone, the tears of Rosalia again flowed. She bitterly lamented the weakness she had been guilty of, in yielding her heart to one who, though so amiable and deserving, had never professed more than inviolable friendship.

“ Alas!” she exclaimed, “ why did I consent to leave the peaceful habitation of my early youth—for surely my heart foreboded some calamity! Ah! why did my adored parent yield to the solicitations of the Countess, and undertake the ill-omened journey? Yet wherefore do I complain? Is not my affliction the effect of my indiscretion? How frequently have I listened to the recital of the miseries produced by *love*, and yet I have suffered myself to become too sensible of the attentions of a stranger, who may have perceived, and perhaps despises, my folly! Ah! even now, do I not regret that I am not *certain* of *being beloved*, though a few minutes only

are fled since I gloried in the consciousness of never having been addressed on the subject—strange inconsistency! How can I——”

These agonizing reflections were, however, soon suspended by the sweet tones of the flute;—strains of thrilling harmony floated on the breeze of night.

Rosalia scarcely dared to breathe. The plaintive adagio was continued; it was an air which she had frequently sung in the temple. When the music ceased, a deep sigh relieved her oppressed heart. Again she listened; at intervals the strains returned. Once, in the middle of an enchanting cadence, the musician was suddenly interrupted, and she faintly distinguished the voices of men conversing with quickness. After a few minutes, the voices were no longer heard, and all was silent. An unaccountable terror struck on her beating heart. That Guidoni was the musician, she did not doubt; to what unknown danger might he not be exposed! A thousand
dreadful

dreadful images assailed her fancy—murder!—banditti!—her senses almost fled. Hastily wrapping her clothes around her lovely form, she approached the window. The brilliance of an Italian midnight rendered the surrounding objects visible. The hollow dashing of the waves, and the soft breeze murmuring through the groves, alone were heard. In vain her eyes wandered in search of Guidoni, while her attentive ear caught the faintest sound that mingled with the breeze.

For half an hour she had continued anxiously listening, when the sound of a footstep was heard in the serpentine path beneath her window.

The moon shone full on the person of a man, who was advancing slowly: she soon perceived it was not the Count Guidoni; the air of the figure led her to suppose it was Ferdinand. As he approached nearer, she was confirmed in the idea; but as he passed beneath the window he paused, and she had scarcely time to escape undiscovered.

Released from her fears respecting the safety of Guidoni, her thoughts now reverted to the embarrassment he must have suffered in being discovered by his friend, and she shuddered at the inference that might be drawn from the nocturnal wanderings of the Count.

“ Ah! to what distress has my imprudence exposed me!” sighed Rosalia. “ How shall I dare to raise my eyes to those of my dear, generous parents; my confusion will betray my unpardonable folly. My revered aunt too—her sweet, mild glances will never more fill my heart with delight. I shall tremble in the presence of those whom I have never beheld but with joy and reverence.”

She now passed the night in tears of sad regret, and the first rays of the sun darted through the pale pink curtains of her windows ere she felt the influence of sleep.

Languid and melancholy, she descended to breakfast. The Countess alone welcomed her with cheerfulness. An air of chagrin and absence marked the features of
the

the Count; he regarded her with a scrutinizing look, and hoped she had perfectly recovered from her sudden indisposition.

“Not perfectly, my Lord,” replied she, deeply blushing — “Is my cousin absent, my Lord?” she continued, eager to escape the observations of the Count.

“No, lovely Rosalia,” returned the Count, his disturbed air instantly yielding to smiles. — “How happy am I to witness this charming attention to the companion of your youth. I feared the busy scenes you have been engaged in of late had obliterated the sweet domestic affections of your heart.”

“Oh, my Lord!” she replied, “is it possible you could have conceived so degrading a suspicion! Oh, no! while I have life, my sentiments of friendship and affection to my friends can never cease. No splendor, no situation can ever erase the regretted scenes of my early years.”

“Why *regretted*, my amiable young friend?” enquired the Count. Signora

di Romanzini has it still in her power to continue dear to the hearts of those who place their happiness in her keeping. Heaven forbid I should ever behold the felicity of my valued friends diminished!—but that can never occur, while Rosalia can encrease their tranquillity.”

“ Ah, never, I hope !” ejaculated the conscious Rosalia.—The entrance of a servant prevented the Count’s saying more, and the conversation turned on indifferent subjects.

The name of Guidoni was not mentioned, and Ferdinand did not appear during breakfast. Afterwards the Countess and Rosalia retired to the dressing-room of the former; but the Countess very prudently avoided any conversation which could revive the emotions of the latter.

Meanwhile Ferdinand impatiently awaited the promised visit of the Count, who did not appear till late.

The solemnity of the Count’s air struck
the

the heart of Ferdinand with excessive alarm, and he eagerly enquired the cause.

“Be composed, my son,” said the Count, relaxing a little from his gravity; “what I have to communicate will be equally gratifying to your affections and your pride—attend.”

The Count took a chair, and, desiring his son to be seated, began—“It is almost needless to say how anxiously I have watched over you from early childhood to this hour, or to add with what solicitude and care I have studied every method to promote your honour and happiness. You were scarcely risen from childhood, when I introduced you to the angelic female who, with her parents and my approbation, will unite her destiny with your’s. The beauty of your cousin is not her chief recommendation; her virtues, her rank, and fortune, will ensure you honour, wealth, and power. Rejoice, therefore, my son, for the lovely Rosalia di Romanzini is your’s.”

“My

“ My Lord!” cried the amazed Ferdinand, while the pallid hue of death overspread his fine countenance; his eyes fell beneath the steady gaze of the Count, and he hesitated.

“ What is the cause of this agitation?” demanded the Count, in a tone of severity.

Ferdinand durst not encounter the penetrating glances of his father; he remained silent and confused, till the Count, in extreme anger, repeated his enquiry.

“ I fear,” faltered Ferdinand, “ I fear, my revered father, I am not so sensible of this intended honour as I could wish.”

“ Impossible!” exclaimed the Count, rising.

“ Alas! it is too true,” sighed Ferdinand. “ Permit me to withdraw, my Lord. I——”

“ Stay, Signor,” commanded the Count, “ stay, and deign to inform me how you possess the temerity to decline such an alliance. You cannot be insensible of the perfections of Rosalia.”

“ Oh no, my father!” replied Ferdinand.

“ Rosalia

“ Rosalia di Romanzini is, indeed, the most charming of her sex; but I—my surprise is extreme. This is the first intimation I have ever received of your design. I am unprepared; I——Why has this intention been so long concealed?”

“ It was the generous wish of the Marchese to leave your’s and his daughter’s affections unbiassed,” returned the Count. “ But cease, my dear Ferdinand—I too clearly see the disappointment of my long-cherished hopes. Oh! how could I expect—but, my son, I would not *exert* the authority of a parent; I would not *compel* you to enter into engagements repugnant to the feelings of your heart. Do not then, by an obstinate resistance to my commands, oblige me to enforce my will.”

The agitation of Ferdinand was excessive; he several times attempted to speak, but could not articulate a sentence.

“ You were wrong in continuing your friendship with the Count Guidoni, after the arrival of Rosalia at Naples,” resumed
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the Count Alvania.—“ I fear you encourage the absurd idea, that the lovely angel regards him with partiality: dismiss the erroneous supposition; she is not capable of such weakness—and the Count Guidoni has evinced that his attentions proceeded from gallantry alone, by hastily quitting this part of the country, in a few hours after I had informed him of your engagements.”

“ Is it possible, my Lord, you informed the Count Guidoni that I was acquainted with your intentions?” anxiously demanded Ferdinand.

“ Certainly.”

“ What a detestable hypocrite he must suppose me!” exclaimed Ferdinand.

“ By no means,” coolly replied the Count: “ I easily understood he had never spoke to you on the subject, and I very properly placed *your* silence to a modest diffidence.”

“ Poor Guidoni !” ejaculated Ferdinand.

“ Silence, Signor,” said the Count, in an
angry

angry and authoritative tone. "I will not hear my actions commented on. You are not *now* ignorant of my views—prepare yourself to *obey* me."

Oppressed with sorrow, Ferdinand bowed. The Count now withdrew, leaving the former to deplore, in private, his own secret woes, and those of his most valued friend, who, he was well assured, adored Rosalia, and who, he was sensible, had flown only from the dread of interrupting the happiness of one apparently so undeserving of such delicate attention.

"Ah!" exclaimed Ferdinand, "why did I not repose my sorrows in the bosom of friendship! Generous, noble Guidoni! delicacy and manly honour alone sealed your lips, while I, selfish and reserved, confined to my own breast a secret, which, if divulged, would have spared us both the agony each too severely feels! Yes, Guidoni will now conclude that my dejection proceeded from witnessing the mutual affection subsisting between him and the charming

charming Rosalia. Dear Rosalia!" continued the unhappy Ferdinand, "innocent, artless angel! my ungenerous reserve has been the means of destroying your peace also!—My own sorrows I might have endured, but to have rendered miserable all those I held most dear, is madness!"

A prey to heart-rending anguish, Ferdinand quitted his apartments, and sought the most retired shades, there to indulge his secret grief. Meanwhile the Count had proceeded to the apartments of the Countess, and presented to Rosalia the packet he had withheld till the departure of the Count Guidoni.

CHAP. XII.

EAGER to peruse the epistles of her beloved parent and Santa Clara, Rosalia hastened to her apartment, whither the Countess was soon summoned ; for Rosalia had fainted ere she had concluded the letter of the Marchese.

The Countess was not surprised at the situation in which she found her ; already acquainted by the Count with the purport of the Marchese's epistle to his daughter, she had expected the consequences it had now produced. With eyes filled with the tears of pity, she assisted to recover the lovely afflicted from her swoon ; but Rosalia had

had experienced a shock too great for her delicate frame to support, and her insensibility was of long continuance.

When at length she opened her eyes, she faintly ejaculated the name of Guidoni, and burst into tears. The soothing softness and affectionate expressions of the Countess, contributed to the recovery of Rosalia, who, while she trembled at the recollection of what she had read, requested her amiable friend to peruse the letters.

The Countess reluctantly complied.

The Marchese, in terms truly parental, explained to his daughter his wishes respecting her union with Ferdinand, and seemed not to entertain a doubt of her affection for her cousin; he gently urged her to signify her consent, and requested her to return to the castle in a fortnight, to celebrate her nuptials.

The letter of Santa Clara breathed the most animated concern for the happiness of her niece. The amiable woman desired her to write her express sentiments regarding Ferdinand,

Ferdinand, and advised her by no means to imagine that the Marchese required a reluctant obedience to his wishes—"My beloved Rosalia," continued the Abbess, "has not the frowns of a rigid parent to encounter; it is her happiness alone that can constitute that of her friends."

This letter poured balm into the wounded heart of Rosalia, and tears of mingled gratitude and sorrow bedewed her pallid cheek.

She lamented, with heartfelt concern, her inability to comply with the commands of her adored father, and dreaded the effects her rejection of Ferdinand might produce. The remembrance of Guidoni added to the poignancy of her feelings, and she wept a predilection which appeared likely to prove fatal to the happiness of her dearest friends.

The entrance of the physician put a period to private discourse; and, as he enjoined repose and quiet, the subject was not renewed after his departure.

When the Countess perceived Rosalia had become more composed, she attended the Count, who was impatiently waiting her appearance. His anxiety respecting Rosalia being satisfied, he informed the Countess how much averse to the union he had found his son, and again reproached her as being the occasion of the present disappointments and distresses.

The Countess was excessively hurt ; and the Count, vexed at the effects of his harsh treatment, apologised for his indiscretion.

“ Forgive me, my beloved Isabella,” said the Count, tenderly ; “ this asperity, you well know, is not natural—I am almost distracted by the obstinacy of Ferdinand—I am convinced he will die rather than accept the hand of Rosalia, averse as they both seem to the union.”

“ Apprized of that, could you now wish their union ?” enquired the Countess.

“ Yes,” returned Alvanio ; “ their alliance has so long been the first wish of my heart,

heart, that I cannot relinquish the hope of it without extreme agony."

"I fear you must," seriously replied the Countess.

The Count appeared extremely agitated—"Then," said he, after pausing some minutes, "then I must submit to my fate—but I shall never more know peace. Return, I intreat, my Isabella," continued he, "return to the chamber of Rosalia, and, if possible, represent to her the felicity which may attend her compliance."

"Ah! my Lord," returned the Countess, "do not give me the pain of denying your request—I cannot utter a falsehood—Rosalia must not be influenced by me on this subject—spare me the dissembling task!"

"It is well," replied the Count, with a deep sigh; "leave me, Isabella—I was wrong to urge such a request."

The Countess, alarmed and shocked at the agonizing inquietude which evidently overwhelmed the Count, endeavoured to sooth his disordered mind, by the most en-

dearing and consoling expressions of sympathy; and she succeeded so far as to obtain from him a promise, that he would make the painful effort of reconciling himself to the disappointment of his hopes.

The Countess had no sooner withdrawn, than the Count again indulged the anguish of his heart: To meet, in one moment, the dissolution of his favourite plan, wounded him to the soul; and his distress was increased, by the recollection of an imprudent step which he had suddenly taken with the Count Guidoni.

Alvanio, on the preceding night, was writing in his own apartment, when the soft tones of Guidoni's flute interrupted, and threw him into a violent rage. Under the influence of this passion, he descended into the garden, from whence he suddenly issued on the astonished Guidoni. In a haughty tone the incensed Count demanded—"Who disturbed the silence of the night?"

Guidoni sought not to conceal himself;
he

he advanced towards the Count Alvania, and apologized for the alarm he had occasioned.

The mild dignity of Guidoni's manner calmed the anger of Alvania, and he politely mentioned his surprise at beholding the former so distant from his own residence at so late an hour.

The young Count replied, that his presence there was merely accidental; his horse had strayed from the proper path, and he, being absorbed in melancholy reflections, had not attended to the circumstance, until the dark mists of evening drew him from his reverie.—“In vain I exerted myself to recover the road,” continued Guidoni; “after wandering about for several hours, I found myself at some trifling distance from your villa, my Lord. Unwilling to intrude at such an hour, I sought shelter in the temple, which I am perfectly acquainted with, and was beguiling the hours with my flute when you discovered me.”

“You will pardon me, Count Guidoni,”

II 3

said

said Alvanio; "I had supposed that the charms of the beautiful Rosalia where the attractions that occasioned the strains of harmony and love so near my residence."

Guidoni, tremblingly alive to whatever related to the lovely object of his cares, replied—"I would, my Lord, I could entertain the enchanting hope of having been attended to by Signora di Romanzini—but my presumption has never flattered me with such an idea."

"Without *flattery*, the Count Guidoni might justly hope that his attentions were highly pleasing to any lady whom he honours with his esteem," returned Alvanio; "that *Rosalia* should prove insensible," continued he, "is not surprising—the affianced bride of an amiable young man could yield only her *friendship* to the friend of her destined husband."

A deep sigh burst from the lips of Guidoni, and he appeared sinking to the earth, when the Count made an effort to support him.

Expressions

Expressions of astonishment and concern were uttered by Alvanio, who found much difficulty in recovering the wretched Guidoni from the shock he had received.

“ Ah, is it possible ! ” faintly ejaculated the Count Guidoni. “ Cruel Ferdinand, you have undone your friend for ever ! ”

“ Good heaven ! ” cried the Count Alvanio, “ surely my son informed you that the hand of Rosalia di Romanzini had been disposed of in his favour from her childhood. My valued friend, the Marchese di Romanzini, has refused the most noble offers, in consequence of this long projected union. Ferdinand surely could not have been thus disingenuous. ”

“ Oh ! too truly, till this moment, ” returned Guidoni, “ I have been fatally ignorant of this circumstance. ”

“ Then the romantic folly of my son, ” said Alvanio, “ has occasioned this unfortunate misunderstanding—a ridiculous delicacy seals his lips on this subject. Fearful lest the mind of Rosalia might be in-

fluenced by motives of filial duty in accepting his hand, he permits her to be surrounded by the most accomplished cavaliers, and he would be properly punished should she particularly distinguish some other noble youth. Hitherto the heart of Rosalia has been faithful to its first affection, and she will speedily be recalled to Orenza, to celebrate the approaching nuptials. Early to-morrow morning I shall make known to her the wishes of the Marchese."

"It is in vain," said Guidoni, after a melancholy pause, "it is in vain to attempt concealing the situation of my heart—my horror and anguish have too plainly revealed the truth. To your honour, my Lord, I entrust this fatal secret. The pure angelic soul of Rosalia has never been agitated by an avowal of my presumptuous folly. Say to my friend that I respect the motive of his silence—tell him I fly from a scene so fraught with danger to my repose. May he be happy—may the exalted felicity he will soon enjoy ever continue—I dare
not

not behold him, nor the lovely angel who blesses him with her love ; do not suffer her to despise the friend of Ferdinand—I entreat you, my Lord, account for my absence in such a manner as will not permit her to suspect the sad truth. Adieu, my Lord ; may you experience the completion of your happiness—mine is fled for ever !”

The Count Alvania was extremely affected ; he strove to detain the unhappy Guidoni, but he darted from him with inconceivable rapidity, and the thick myrtles entirely veiled his retreat.

The concern of the Count Alvania soon subsided, and he returned to the villa, exulting in the success of his artifices. But when, in the morning, the decided aversion of Ferdinand and Rosalia to the proposed alliance dashed all his aspiring hopes to the earth, he became a prey to the keenest emotions of grief, anger, and remorse. He reflected, with horror, that he had rendered himself odious and contemptible in his own opinion, by having practised a

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shameful

shameful falsehood, and ruined the peace of three of the most amiable beings in the world.

Distracted by his own feelings, the Count knew not how to resolve—to relinquish his views of such an alliance was death; yet he felt assured that he must submit to the unavoidable necessity of so doing, as he well knew the Marchese would not endanger the happiness of his beloved Rosalia.

The Count, bewildered with a thousand maddening reflections, was pacing the saloon, when Don Hernandez de Marino was announced.

Surprise and pleasure animated the countenance of Alvanio, as he received his friend, with every demonstration of the highest satisfaction.

Don Hernandez de Marino was related to the Countess Alvanio. On the Count's arrival in Spain, this nobleman commenced an intimate friendship with him, introduced him to the notice of the lovely Isabella

bella de Riverra, and finally prevailed on her to become Countess Alvanio.

The Countess regarded Don Hernandez as a brother; he had ever been a favourite with Don Anselmo, her deceased father, whose nephew he was; and, becoming an orphan in his infancy, was entrusted to the care of Don Anselmo, who, it was generally imagined, would bestow the hand of his fair daughter on his esteemed nephew, whose rank was unexceptionable, though his fortune was by no means affluent.

For years the friendship of Marino and Alvanio had continued undiminished; and the latter now rejoiced at the unexpected appearance of Hernandez, as he hoped to derive the most essential service from his counsel in the present trying exigence.

“To what am I to attribute this unlooked for pleasure?” said the Count, embracing his friend.

“Merely to a love of variety,” replied Hernandez. “I am weary of Madrid, and am come to Italy to enjoy the soft luxurious

rious pleasures of Naples. Do you intend to remain any time at this villa?"

"No," returned Alvanio; "at present I must continue here a few days; the indisposition of a young lady confines me to this place."

"Who is your fair guest?" enquired Hernandez.

"The lovely Rosalia di Romanzini."

Don Hernandez was silent, and the Count continued—"My expectations are over, my friend; the hearts of Rosalia and Ferdinand are not under my controul, and I fear I shall never behold the accomplishment of my hopes."

"Is she beautiful?" demanded Don Hernandez.

"Beyond description!" affirmed the Count.

"Indeed! has she rejected the hand of Ferdinand?" asked Don Hernandez.

"Not positively," returned Alvanio; "but her present illness is the consequence

of having been informed that the Marchese required her compliance."

"I never approved of the Marchese's concealing his intentions," said Hernandez;

"I suppose she has but lately received the intimation of his will?"

"Only this morning," replied the Count.

"She is very young," observed Hernandez. "Perhaps some more fortunate cavalier possesses that heart which ought to be Ferdinand's."

"Alas!" sighed Alvanio, "you are right in your conjecture."

"Who is he?" demanded Don Hernandez, with surprise and quickness.

"A Piedmontese nobleman—the Count Guidoni."

"Guidoni!" exclaimed the noble Spaniard. "Is he in Naples?"

In answer to this question, the Count related all that had occurred since his return from the Castle of Orenza. Don Hernandez did not approve of his friend's conduct in

some

some particulars, and appeared thoughtful and uneasy. After a pause, he said—

“ You have not conducted this intricate business well, my friend ; however, regret is idle now ; to-morrow we may consult farther. At present the situation of your charming guest claims all your attention. Where is the Countess?—permit me to pay my respects.”

At that moment the Countess entered the saloon, and Rosalia was for an instant unremembered, in the surprise and satisfaction of this unexpected meeting.

During dinner, Ferdinand and Rosalia were the only subjects that engrossed the conversation, and Don Hernandez expressed much curiosity to behold the lovely Rosalia ; he was also anxious to see the son of his friend, whom he remembered an amiable and engaging youth, but Ferdinand did not appear.

When the Count and Don Hernandez retired to take their siesto, the Countess flew to the couch of Rosalia, who was much recovered,

covered, and consoled by the affectionate promises which the Countess had that morning given her, to write to Santa Clara, and inform her of the real state of her young friend's heart with respect to Ferdinand.

During this interview the name of Guidoni was not mentioned ; Rosalia supposed he had called as usual at the villa, and the Countess's silence on the subject, she concluded, arose from their mutual resolution never to introduce his name in their discourse.

When the Countess had bade adieu to her beloved Rosalia, Biancha, who was permitted to remain in the chamber of her lady, began to sigh heavily, and to talk in an under voice to herself. Rosalia, alarmed, eagerly enquired the cause.

" Oh the saints !" exclaimed Biancha, " are you awake, Signora ? "

" You do not seem disposed to suffer me to repose, Biancha," mildly replied Rosalia. " What were you saying ? "

" Indeed, Signora," hesitated Biancha,

" I—

“I—I dare not tell—you will be so displeased—”

“If you have ought to say unfit for my ear, it were best you were silent, Biancha,” returned her lady.

“Unfit—Oh no, Signora; but—you never permit me to tell you any thing—I believe if our burning mountain fell into the middle of the sea, I must not speak of it—Oh, if I dare—it is all truth, I assure you, Signora.”

Rosalia imagining that Biancha had only some wonderful supernatural tale to relate, and being eager to divert her own thoughts from reflecting on the painful incidents which had lately occurred, desired the girl to acquaint her with the information she appeared so anxious to communicate.

“Oh, I am so happy!” cried Biancha. “San Pietro defend me! How you will be surprised at the deceit of some people!—Cavalier, indeed!—if I, or Carloni, had told such a tale, I should expect that—”

“Begin your story, Biancha, or I will
hear

hear no more," said Rosalia, unaccountably agitated.

"Pardon me, Signora—but I am so angry. Well then, Signora, did you hear the charming music last night?"

Rosalia, extremely confused, made no reply, and Biancha run on.

"Oh, how beautiful that amiable cavalier plays!—but I did not know it was him then—however, Signora, the Count was playing last night, and I and Villetta, the Countess's attendant, were walking in the little almond walk, near the gate that opens into the myrtle grove, under your window. Well, Signora, we were listening at this gate, and wondering who it was that played so sweetly, when Villetta heard a footstep—she ran directly up the almond walk; but I, frightened out of my wits, ran through the gate into the myrtle grove, and who should I happen to see but the Count Alvania—I saw him quite plain, as I hid behind one of the trees. Presently the music stopped, and I heard voices.—

Now,

Now, Signora, I am sure you will blame me for what I did."

"Proceed," faintly articulated Rosalia.

"Indeed, Signora, I could not help following the Count Alvanio.—Well, when I came to a turn in the walk, there I saw the handsome young Count Guidoni leaning against one of the trees—the moon shone full on his face—his eyes were shut, and he looked as pale as death—Oh, how I trembled! I thought the Count Alvanio had killed him, till I heard *him* talk to the young Count, and desire him to compose himself—and then——"

"Oh, Heavens!" exclaimed Rosalia.

Biancha, terrified at the looks of her lady, who was as pale as the Count had been described, would instantly have flown to the apartments of the Countess; but Rosalia recovering, peremptorily forbade her, and commanded her to proceed with her discourse.

Biancha then related, tolerably correct, the conversation that passed between the
Counts

Counts Alvania and Guidoni. Rosalia listened with astonishment and horror; but these painful sensations soon yielded to emotions of the purest rapture—Guidoni, the virtuous, noble-minded Guidoni, adored her, and she now exulted in the certainty of possessing his affections, while she wept the artifices of Alvania, which had led the former into the erroneous opinion of her being fondly attached to Ferdinand. Rosalia had ever respected the Count Alvania as the chosen friend of her revered parent, and the nephew of the Duke; how painful, therefore, was the discovery of his unworthiness! A deviation from strict truth had ever appeared to the virtuous mind of the innocent Rosalia, an error of the first magnitude; and this feeling rendered the Count Alvania an object of horror in her eyes. That Ferdinand had been as unconscious as herself of the intentions of the Marchese, she had learned from the Countess; and she had likewise heard, with infinite satisfaction, that he was as unwilling to comply with the
commands

commands of the Count as she could desire; the assertion which the Count had ventured of Ferdinand's being ardently attached to her, was therefore a falsehood of the most glaring kind, and excited her abhorrence.

With the delicacy of true friendship, she quickly resolved not to wound the feelings of the Countess, by informing her of the despicable conduct of the Count; and she cautioned Biancha never to breathe the slightest hint of what she had so fortunately discovered.

The faithful attendant vowed to be silent, and was delighted with the patient hearing her beloved lady had afforded her intelligence.

The account Rosalia had just received led her to indulge the most pleasing hopes. Certain that the Marchese, when acquainted with their mutual disinclination to the marriage, would permit her rejection of Ferdinand, she now felt no concern arise from the dread of hurting the feelings of the
Count

Count Alvania; and her beloved Countess, she well knew, would not repine at the extinction of views which, had they been accomplished, must have destroyed the happiness of her Rosalia.

Rosalia was too much the child of Nature, not to feel the most exquisite pleasure from the assurance of Guidoni's love, and a thousand fairy visions of future felicity were pictured by her vivid fancy. That Guidoni would soon be undeceived respecting her union with Ferdinand, she entertained not the least doubt, and when once more happy in the protection of the Marchese, enjoying the society of her beloved friends at Orenza and Santa Maria, perhaps Guidoni might stray near the ancient walls of the castle, and become the favoured guest of the Duke.

Indulging thus the sweet illusions of hope, she sunk into calm repose.

CHAP. XIII.

WITH a heart relieved from a weight of woe, and her countenance beaming angelic serenity, Rosalia arose from her couch, and descended to the saloon, where she found the Count and Countess, and Don Hernandez, assembled to breakfast.

The Count welcomed Rosalia with the most winning politeness—she blushed deeply, and averted her eyes, as she replied to his compliments. In the expressive smiles of the Countess, she read the sincere pleasure that amiable woman experienced on beholding her so much recovered.

Her attention was next engaged by Don Hernandez

Hernandez de Marino, whom the Countess introduced as her relation and friend; as such, Rosalia regarded him, with the most lively prepossession in his favour, while his graceful elegant form, and his polite insinuating address, bespoke him a sensible and accomplished cavalier.

Don Hernandez was about forty-two, but did not appear more than two-and-thirty; his figure was strikingly majestic, his countenance was handsome, and his large dark eyes were animated and expressive; his air was alternately commanding, or gracefully soft. In conversation, he was alike qualified to shine, by his extensive knowledge, and a peculiar talent of leading captive the heart of sensibility, or diffusing the liveliest gaiety by his wit and vivacity.

When Rosalia entered the saloon, Don Hernandez stood gazing at her lovely face and form with the most profound admiration. His imagination had never represented any being so truly beautiful; and he did not hesitate, when apart with the
Count,

Count, to pronounce her the most perfect production of human nature.

In this idea he was fully confirmed when he entered into conversation with her; beautiful, well informed, sensible, entirely destitute of affectation, and preserving the most enchanting *naivette*, she fascinated the heart, while her piety and modest elegance forbade the slightest familiarity.

When the Countess and Rosalia had withdrawn, Don Hernandez lavished the most rapturous praise on the extreme beauty and superior talents of the latter; and filled the heart of the Count with dismay, by advising him by no means to think of soliciting her further on the subject of her union with Ferdinand.

“ The Marchese,” observed Don Hernandez, “ will never *insist* on her compliance; and such excellence should be free from disgusting importunities, which can never produce any good effects. The mind of Rosalia possesses fortitude as well as sensibility—she will never consent to what she judges

judges wrong. Desist, therefore, my friend, and endear yourself to the Duke di Orenza, by preferring Rosalia's felicity to the aggrandizement of your son. The future favour of your illustrious relative may amply reward the present sacrifice," added Don Hernandez, significantly.

The sudden entrance of Ferdinand interrupted the conversation, and the Count immediately introduced him to his friend.

Don Hernandez distinguished Ferdinand by many well-turned compliments, which were received very coldly; for Ferdinand had, when a child, conceived an unaccountable aversion to Marino, and this aversion, notwithstanding a separation of many years, still existed.

Not the slightest reference was made to the proposed alliance; the Count and Don Hernandez soon withdrew to the cabinet of the former, leaving Ferdinand alone, a prey to suspense, and a thousand contending emotions.

In the hope of finding the Count disengaged,

gaged, Ferdinand had entered the saloon, with the determination of revealing to his father, that his heart was no longer in his own power to bestow, and to throw himself on his mercy. Disappointed in this intention by the presence of Don Hernandez, of whose arrival he had, until then, been ignorant, having since the preceding morning confined himself to his own apartments, where he scarcely permitted his own attendants to disturb his melancholy reflections, Ferdinand now resolved to acquaint the Countess with his secret sorrows, and to request her interference with the Count.

In the apartment of his mother he encountered Rosalia, and an *eclaircissement* ensued between these amiable young friends, which happily terminated the fears of Ferdinand, and determined him to delay his communications for the present. Certain that Rosalia would not be urged to a union from which her heart revolted, Ferdinand now rejoiced in the prospect of being
spared

spared the painful task of resisting the commands of a revered parent.

The Count Alvania possessed many amiable qualities; he was an affectionate husband, and an indulgent parent, but his mind had no permanent strength or firmness; it was, therefore, possible to draw him from the line of rectitude, when the aggrandizement of his much loved-son was concerned. Without judgment and art to conduct difficult plans, he would frequently undertake, without being able to execute them. While he resided in Spain, the shining talents and profound knowledge of Don Hernandez were repeatedly exerted in his aid; and the Count Alvania was distinguished by the Court of Madrid for several excellent political plans, which had really been suggested and carried into effect by the superior abilities of his friend, who secretly directed every action of the Count. After Alvania returned to Naples, a regular correspondence commenced between these friends, and continued uninterrupted

till Don Hernandez unexpectedly appeared at the villa.

Intimately acquainted with all the concerns of Alvanio, Hernandez had been long accustomed to consider the alliance of the Di Orenza and Alvanio families as certain ; but even his friendship to the Count would not stimulate him to advise perseverance, on a point so likely to increase the honour and wealth of his friend, after having seen Rosalia di Romanzini. On the contrary, Don Hernandez made use of the most forcible arguments to dissuade the Count from requesting the Marchese to enjoin his lovely daughter to compliance.

The warmth and earnestness of Hernandez excited the suspicions of Alvanio, who anxiously requested the former to inform him, whether the fascinating charms of Rosalia had not made an impression on his heart?—"Assure me of this terrible truth," added the Count, "and I shall then, indeed, feel that all my hopes are annihilated."

Don

Don Hernandez appeared confused and angry at this attempt to develop his private sentiments. The alarmed and agonized manner of the Count, likewise hurt his feelings, and offended him; and he would have quitted the cabinet in silent indignation, had not his friend detained and intreated him to excuse his hasty expressions, and to attribute them to the violent agitation of his mind.

Don Hernandez then protested he had no other view in the advice he had given, than the interest of his friend; and represented so forcibly the improbability of the Marchese or the Duke ever commanding the lovely Rosalia to yield her consent to an alliance to which neither she nor Ferdinand had the least inclination, that the Count agreed to write to the Marchese, to state the mutual disinclination of the cousins to the proposed union, and to resign his hopes in a manner that could not fail to increase their ancient friendship.

On this prudent resolution Hernandez

bestowed flattering commendations, and insisted upon having the happiness of communicating the generous resolve to Ferdinand and Rosalia, while the Count should be employed in preparing his dispatches.

The Countess, accompanied by her son and Rosalia, attended Don Hernandez in the saloon, where he had requested their presence, and where he now received the grateful acknowledgments of Rosalia for the friendly concern he had shewn for the happiness of herself and Ferdinand; the latter had too much gallantry to say much on the subject, and Hernandez rallied him, with great vivacity, on his patiently enduring such an interference.

The Count soon after made his appearance, and Rosalia expressed her thanks for his consideration and indulgence, in terms that seemed to affect and reconcile Alvanio to his disappointment.

The Count now intimated, that if she wished to address the Marchese, and the Madre Santa Clara, he should be happy to enclose

enclose her letters in the packet he purposed speedily sending off to Orenza. Rosalia retired, truly sensible of his friendly attentions, and the generous manner in which he bore so disagreeable an occurrence.

The letter she now addressed to the Marchese breathed unfeigned regret—a filial sorrow at wanting power to conform her inclinations to her duty, was evident in every line.

Her epistle to the Abbess was less ingenuous: she feelingly lamented that the long indulged hopes of the Duke and the Marchese were on the point of becoming extinct, by the insensibility that subsisted between Ferdinand and herself; but she gave not the slightest hint which might lead to a supposition that her heart was susceptible of the merits of another. Accustomed, in writing to this valued friend, to submit every thought of her mind to her inspection, she now felt confused and embarrassed—she durst not trust herself to

write the name of Guidoni, and till now she had always mentioned him; but at those times she was not conscious of her own sentiments for him; her praises, therefore, were as animated as artless—delicacy now prohibited the pleasing theme; her letter, of course, spoke only her regrets, and the disinterested conduct of the Count Alvanio.

Having finished and presented her letters to the Count, who soon after dispatched them, with his own, to Orenza, she returned to her apartments, restless and discomposed—she had acted with a disingenuousness foreign to her nature, and could scarcely support the self-disapprobation she now felt. Justly fearing that if she encouraged these painful reflections, her looks would betray the agitation of her mind, she endeavoured to divert her thoughts, by preparing for a *fête* which was to take place on the following day. But vainly did she attempt to suppress a regret, which she trembled to confess even to herself, when
she

she reflected that the Count Guidoni would be absent from the numerous party invited to celebrate the recovery of her beloved relative, the Duke di Orenza. At length the evening devoted to festivity arrived—the luxuriant groves of the villa Alvanio were now splendidly illuminated, and the apartments of the elegant dwelling displayed the most costly arrangements, and the most delicious collations.

Shining in beauty and splendour, Rosalia appeared conspicuous in the vivacious throng; but the flattering incense of unbounded admiration could not, for a moment, efface the remembrance of Count Guidoni. Several times she was oppressed with emotions she was unable to subdue; but the scrutinizing glances of Don Hernandez at length alarmed her pride, and caused her to assume a vivacity foreign to her heart.

She had justly imbibed a dread, that the Count Alvanio suspected her sentiments for Guidoni; and the fixed observation with

which Hernandez now regarded her, created a distressing apprehension, that the Count had revealed his suspicions to his friend, and thence directed the eye of curiosity towards her conduct. The sudden generosity that marked the Count's relinquishment of his highly-prized hopes, contributed to strengthen this opinion; and Rosalia could not silence the suggestions of her heart, which represented the late amiable conduct of Alvania, as the effect of his having discerned her attachment to Guidoni, succeeded by a wish of atoning for the unhappiness he had caused the Count to suffer, by the fabrication he deceived him with. The sacrifice the Count Alvania had made, claimed her sincere gratitude; yet she felt humiliated, while thus surmising the cause of his kindness. Don Hernandez had announced the determination of the Count, nay, his words had obliquely implied, that he had strengthened the resolutions of Alvania to resign his claims on the Marchese; it was, therefore,
more

more than probable that Hernandez was acquainted with her predilection for Guidoni.

Impressed with these ideas, she now became more and more confused and embarrassed by the unremitting attentions of Don Hernandez; to avoid which, she, at length, joined a group of the youthful nobility, who were displaying their attractions in the festive dance.

The young and handsome Marchese di Mazzini eagerly engaged her hand, and she soon mingled in the sprightly throng.

At the conclusion of the dance, and while the young Marchese was profuse in his polite attentions to his lovely partner, Ferdinand approached, and, in a low tone, intreated her to accompany him to the Countess.

Having made her excuses to the Marchese, Rosalia immediately proceeded with her cousin. He appeared pale and agitated, his voice faltered, as he several times attempted to address his lovely relative.

When they had quitted the square, he
1. 6. caught

caught her hand, and quickly hurried her towards the entrance of the villa; which having reached, Ferdinand, in a low and almost inarticulate voice, said—"Pardon me, dearest Rosalia—my mother—she is in the saloon—proceed thither, my beloved cousin, and—"

Some company then advancing, Ferdinand suddenly ceased, and, in silence, conducted her towards the door of the saloon, where he hastily quitted her.

Rosalia hesitated to enter—an impulse of terror, occasioned by the wild and alarming air of Ferdinand, suspended her steps.

A deep sigh from within struck on her ear, and immediately after, a voice, in a tone of complaint, uttered several indistinct expressions.

Rosalia remained alarmed and irresolute; she was close to the door, but dared not enter.

A footstep sounded on the marble pavement, and again the pathetic tones were heard—she once more made an effort to
regain

regain her courage. The voice, she remarked, was soft and plaintive—the language Italian, spoken with somewhat of the Spanish accent.

She no longer hesitated—she opened the door—and at that instant heard the Countess exclaim—“Alas! this imprudent action may involve me in innumerable difficulties!—Would I could see Signora di Romanzini.”

Rosalia, on hearing this anxious wish expressed, blushed at her own timidity, and entered the saloon.

CHAP. XIV.

THE noise occasioned by the opening of the door alarmed the Countess; she sprang from her seat, and her companion hastily retreated to the most obscure part of the room.

Rosalia, checked by the action of the Countess, hesitated to advance, till that lady approached, and taking her hand, apologised for her apparent surprise.

The eye of Rosalia involuntarily followed the figure of the person, who had fled on her entrance; but the dark robe of the stranger would not allow of a minute scrutiny,

scrutiny, and she could scarcely distinguish the outlines of the form.

The Countess observed the anxious gaze of the lovely girl, and immediately requested the stranger to advance, who instantly obeyed; and, to the astonishment of Rosalia, she beheld a beautiful young female, attired in black, her face partly concealed by a veil of the same colour, her dark eyes were suffused with tears, as she raised them towards heaven, and, with graceful timidity, approached.

Rosalia stood the image of surprise; she gazed on the young stranger, and then turned her eyes with a look of enquiry on the Countess, who said—

“Circumstances of the most complicated nature, my beloved Rosalia, induce me to implore your assistance—the present time will not admit of explanation—will you consent to receive this amiable young person into your apartments, in the capacity of an additional attendant?”

To this request Rosalia immediately as-

sented, and the Countess ordered the young stranger to attend with lights to the apartments of the former.

Having entered the dressing-room, the Countess exclaimed—"Charming Rosalia, permit me to introduce this lovely young female to your friendship. The birth of Josephine is equal to your own—her fortunes should have been great—her virtues are her best portion—afflictions, which at present oppress her, render concealment indispensable. Had I acted with propriety, she would, before now, have been known to you ; as it is, I give to your friendship one deserving of your tenderest considerations. How fortunate," added the Countess, "was your entrance into the saloon, at the moment my heart was torn with indecision—What occasioned you to forsake the gardens?"

"Your son," replied Rosalia, "desired my presence, with so much earnestness, that I found it impossible to refuse."

A death-like paleness overspread the countenance

countenance of Josephine, and the Countess exclaimed—"Is it possible!"

Rosalia beheld the effects of her information with dismay; Josephine hid her face and wept, while the Countess regarded the latter with looks of pity and distress.

A slight rap at the door of the dressing-room, occasioned new terror. Josephine started from her seat, and the Countess pointed to an inner room, whither her fair *protégée* instantly retired.

"Be not alarmed and surprised at these mysterious proceedings, my Rosalia," said the Countess; "hereafter all shall be explained—I will answer this intruder," added she, as, with an air of solemnity, she proceeded to and threw open the door, when, to the surprise of Rosalia and herself, she discovered Ferdinand!

On perceiving the Countess, he instantly threw himself at her feet, and entreated forgiveness.

"You may enter for a moment," said the Countess, with an air of dignified displeasure,

pleasure, and retreating towards the middle of the chamber; “unfortunate, disobedient young man, you can scarcely increase my sorrows.”

This severe reproof seemed to penetrate the heart of Ferdinand—“I came, my mother,” said he, with humility, “to see my Josephine, to vow never more to molest her tranquillity—but I will no longer intrude—I submit for the present.” Ferdinand hesitated, then resumed—“Yet let me entreat permission to see her once more, before I leave the villa. Oh, my mother! why not now? Your presence will sanction mine—I acknowledge my rash design, and implore pardon. The excess of my affection will not, I fear, palliate my imprudence in the eyes of Josephine. That my views were just and honourable, I trust the lovely object of my love cannot doubt. You my mother,” added he, “have already looked my pardon—permit me to see my Josephine—suffer me to intreat her’s also.”

“Ferdinand,

“Ferdinand, Ferdinand,” answered the Countess, solemnly, “the sophistry of youth deludes you ! Was it just and honourable to tear from the bosom of security a young and lovely female, who possessed too much virtue and delicacy to become the voluntary companion of your flight ? Learn, mistaken youth, that had Josephine yielded to your importunities, and become your wife, you would not have long enjoyed the fruits of your disobedience and imprudence ; for such are her circumstances, that her life would probably have been the forfeit of your temerity.”

To describe the feelings of Ferdinand on receiving this information, would be impossible. His amazement and terror were so excessive, that the Countess requested the presence of Josephine, to aid her in soothing his extreme agitation.

The tears of Josephine awakened all the sensibility of her lover ; regardless of the presence of the Countess and Rosalia, and the blushes of Josephine, he threw himself

self at the feet of the latter, and vowed to live devoted to her alone, yet never to seek another interview, till her safety rendered it no longer dangerous. “Oh, my mother!” he cried, when the blushing Josephine had disengaged herself from his fond entreaties, “say, tell me, is my adored Josephine yet secure from her persecutors? Have not I plunged her into irremediable misery?”

“It would have been much better had you not removed her from Naples,” replied the Countess gravely; “however, she cannot return thither. But,” continued she, “let us trust to Providence, who has already evinced its protecting goodness, in not permitting the accomplishment of your intentions. Retire, Ferdinand,” she added, “and forget not the vow you have just uttered—seek not to see Josephine without my permission—console yourself with this assurance, I do not disapprove your affection. In happier times, perhaps, she may still be your’s. Yet remember
you

you have a father—at present all attempts to obtain his approbation would be in vain—yet of *that* in future, I do not despair.”

In an ecstasy of joy, Ferdinand poured forth his grateful thanks to his amiable mother; and, at the feet of Josephine, besought a confirmation of his pardon, and his re-establishment in her favourable opinion.

Josephine, with glowing cheek, smiled her forgiveness, and softly promised to be guided by the Countess; acknowledging, that sanctioned by her approbation, she should ever consider him with sentiments of the truest regard.

The Countess now insisted on her son's departure, and Ferdinand, after committing Josephine to the friendship of Rosalia, reluctantly withdrew.

The Countess now addressed the astonished Rosalia—“The scene you have just beheld, my young friend,” said she, “no doubt excites your liveliest interest. To
my

my Josephine I depute the task of explanation—yet you must suspend your wish till to-morrow—the tale you will probably deign to listen to is too prolix to come within the limits of this night. I must now bid you adieu. And you, my inestimable Josephine,” continued the Countess, turning to her fair *protégée*, “you, in the protection of this amiable young lady, will be happier far than you have hitherto been with me.”

“My beloved, revered protectress,” answered Josephine, while tears of gratitude wetted her cheek, “Ah, but for your benignant care, how hapless had been the fate of the wretched orphan you have ever cherished with maternal tenderness!” Then addressing herself to Rosalia, “Allow me, amiable Lady Rosalia,” continued she, “to say how truly sensible my heart is of the—”

“Allow me,” interrupted Rosalia, with a fascinating smile, “allow me to request my friend to dry these tears, and to accept
an

an assurance, that I feel highly obliged to the Countess, for permitting me to call her amiable *protégée* my friend."

The Countess alternately embraced the lovely girls, and, after having joined their hands, withdrew; but quickly returned—"My dear Rosalia," said she, "the appearance of your attendant Biancha, whom I have just perceived ascending the stairs, reminds me of having neglected to request you will use your own discretion in the confidence you mean to admit her to, respecting my Josephine."

"Confident of the fidelity of Biancha," replied Rosalia, "I will, with your permission, entrust her with so much of Signora Josephine's situation as will prevent the familiarity which the idea of equality might create in the manners of my simple attendant."

"Act according to your own judgment, my dear young friend," answered the Countess; "your opinion of Biancha directs mine. My ideas are so confused by the
occurrence

occurrence of this evening, that I am utterly forgetful. Josephine, you must quit these apartments as seldom as possible; the chamber adjoining this suite shall immediately be prepared for you."

The entrance of Biancha interrupted the conversation, and the Countess again withdrew.

The attendant looked surprised on seeing Josephine, but prudently checked all indications of curiosity, and merely requested to know if her lady had any commands?

Rosalia, with delicate attention, directed the notice of Josephine to several fine paintings which ornamented the apartment, and, in a low tone of voice, begged she would amuse herself, while Biancha should be informed of what was necessary for her to know.

While Josephine endeavoured to divert her thoughts with contemplating several portraits and landscapes, by the exquisite pencil of Titian, Rosalia informed Biancha, that the Countess had requested her to
receive

receive the young lady, who was present, as an attendant in her apartments.

“In the view of any of the domestics who may chance to behold Signora Josephine,” continued Rosalia, “behave as if she was your equal ; when alone, Biancha, remember she is *mine*, and conduct yourself accordingly ; nay, pay her greater attention, for she is under affliction.”

The faithful attendant listened with tearful eyes, and promised to observe her duty strictly.

Rosalia then addressed her new friend, and assured her, she might, with perfect security, confide in the fidelity of Biancha, whose respectful and ingenuous manners almost immediately prepossessed Josephine in favour of this faithful domestic.

“The Count Alvania, Signora, has been enquiring for you, and, if you are not indisposed, requests you will again join the company,” said Biancha.

Rosalia, aware that she could not long

absent herself from the gardens unobserved, felt the necessity of immediately returning to the festive throng, and apologized to Josephine for bidding her so early an adieu.

“ I fear,” said Rosalia, “ I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you till to-morrow. With reluctance, I leave you to yourself; to-morrow we will devote to friendly communications.”

“ Permit me to ask,” said Josephine, “ whether the small chamber beyond your dressing-room is occupied ?”

“ Sometimes by Biancha,” replied Rosalia, “ though very seldom.”

“ Pardon me, Signora,” said Josephine, “ may I request you will allow me to inhabit that apartment, while I shall have the happiness of residing under your protection ?”

“ Most assuredly,” returned Rosalia; “ had I supposed you would condescend to accept the chamber you mention, I should have proposed it.”

“ Condescend

“Condescend—Ah, Signora!” sighed Josephine.

“Dear Josephine, forgive me; I regret having given you a moment’s uneasiness,” said the amiable Rosalia; “I am infinitely gratified by your wish of being near me.” Then having ordered Biancha to prepare the inner chamber for the reception of the new guest, and to serve refreshments to her, Rosalia was continuing to give further instructions, when a rap at the door caused her to desist—it was one of the Countess’s attendants with a message, and Rosalia was obliged to hasten away.

She found the Countess in the Orangewalk, surrounded by a large party, all of whom had been eagerly enquiring for the lovely heiress.

In a moment Rosalia was assailed by a multitude of complimentary regrets, caused by her late absence, succeeded by reiterated entreaties, not to withdraw herself during the evening.

Amongst the crowd that now hovered around her, Don Hernandez de Marino was extremely solicitous to obtain the favour of her hand in the dance, politely insinuating, that the Countess had ventured to promise her compliance.

Rosalia, on this intimation, permitted the elegant Spaniard to lead her to the sprightly throng: but the impossibility of banishing from her mind the singular occurrence which had just taken place, prevented her paying much attention to the dance, or to her graceful partner; who, observing her abstraction, with infinite chagrin, and half-offended by her indifference, conducted her to a seat, and soon after joined a party of ladies, who seemed more disposed than Rosalia to attend to his endeavours to please.

All solicitations to induce Rosalia to dance again, were politely rejected; which Don Hernandez remarking, he hastily returned to the side of her chair, around
which

which was a group of cavaliers, assiduously vying with each other in their gallant attentions.

The spirits of Rosalia were depressed, she appeared inattentive to the flattering throng that surrounded her; and Don Hernandez taking occasion to introduce some serious topic, she soon found herself almost alone with him. His manners now assumed a softness so perceptible, that she could not avoid being conscious of it; and when he introduced love, and its unhappy effects, when unrequited, into his discourse, she could no longer remain a silent hearer, but rising, requested to be conducted to the Countess, near whom she continued during the remainder of the evening, still assiduously attended by Don Hernandez.

During supper, the eyes of the Count Alvanio were frequently fixed on Rosalia, with undisguised earnestness, and she again found herself under the necessity of assuming vivacity; the effort was painful,

and she rejoiced when the moment of retiring arrived.

The faint blush of the morning illumined the east, when, at length, she entered her apartment.

From Biancha she learned that Josephine had, at the command of the Countess, retired early to repose. "By order of Signora Josephine," continued the attendant, "I informed the Countess of her having requested, and obtained my lady's permission, to occupy the pink chamber; and the Countess then repeated the orders you, Signora, were pleased to give, about refreshments; and her last command was to inform Signora Josephine that it was her wish she should retire at an early hour to rest."

Rosalia soon dismissed Biancha; but in vain she solicited sleep—the occurrences of the night—the image of Guidoni—and a succession of hurried ideas, presented themselves, and forbade repose.

The brilliant rays of the sun had penetrated

trated the latticed windows before she sunk into short and disturbed slumbers, from which she awoke, languid and sad.

CHAP. XV.

JOSEPHINE, who for some time had been watching beside the bed of Rosalia, anxiously observed the indications of inquietude that frequently appeared in her countenance; and when she awoke, Josephine, with earnest solicitude, requested permission to send Biancha to signify her indisposition to the Countess. To this proposition Rosalia acceded, and then partook, with

Josephine, a slight breakfast in her own apartment.

The Countess, on receiving the message, hastened to the chamber of Rosalia, and had the pleasure of finding her lovely guest not so much indisposed as the fears of those about her person had suggested ; the languor of her countenance, however, too plainly indicated the unhappiness which preyed on her mind, and the Countess inwardly wished her charge had never beheld the Count Guidoni.

Resolving not to indulge the unavailing regrets of Rosalia, the Countess seemed not to observe her uneasiness, and quickly began to discourse on the situation of Josephine.

The renewal of this theme caused Rosalia to forget her own secret sorrows, and the lively interest which, on the preceding evening, she had taken in the concerns of the lovely unfortunate, revived with added strength. When the Countess had withdrawn, Josephine prepared to relate
the

the story of her misfortunes, but grief impeded her utterance, while Rosalia, with tenderness and compassion, strove to chase the tear of sad recollection from the cheek of her friend, who, gratefully sensible of the delicate and soothing attention she experienced, suppressed her emotion, and, in the voice of sorrow, began her narration.

“ The few incidents which mark my life, Signora Rosalia, are soon detailed. My mother was the daughter of Don Garcio de Gironne, a grandee of Spain, who became a widower before his children, one son and one daughter, had attained an age to be sensible of his excessive sorrow for his own and their irreparable loss.

“ Devoted to the memory of this beloved and lamented wife, Don Garcio retired to a secluded estate near Placentia, and there educated the children of his Victoria.

“ My uncle was only two years older than his sister ; equal in personal beauty, but totally opposite in dispositions, the haughty

soul of Carlos displayed its propensities even in his infantine amusements; his talents promised to be brilliant, and as he improved in years and knowledge, his pride grew with his personal qualifications, and his mental and polite attainments; yet he was duteous to his father and generous to all; his sister he almost adored, and the young Victoria, my regretted mother, returned the affection of her brother with the tenderest regard. The sweetness of her disposition, and her extreme beauty, were a theme of admiration among all those who, in my grandfather's confined circle, ever beheld her.

“ When Carlos had arrived at the proper age, he was placed in the university of Salamanca, where he became acquainted with a young nobleman, named Don Alphonso de Avilla; and so great a friendship had my uncle conceived for this young cavalier, that he prevailed on Don Garcio to permit him to bring his friend on a visit to the castle.

“ Carlos

“ Carlos and Don Alphonso were received with every demonstration of joy ; a splendid fete was given in honour of the former’s birth-day, which was celebrated in less than a fortnight after his return to the castle.

“ Victoria, who had been on a visit to a neighbouring convent, returned home on the eve of her brother’s natal day, and, for the first time, beheld Don Alphonso de Avilla.

“ Alphonso and Victoria were both of them too amiable not to be mutually charmed with each other, and the admiration each felt was succeeded by an attachment which was sanctioned by the approbation of Don Garcio.

“ Carlos and Alphonso were to remain another year at the university ; at the expiration of which period, the nuptials of Don Alphonso and Victoria were to be celebrated.

“ After passing two months at the castle, enjoying all the happiness resulting from true friendship and reciprocal love, the

friends bade a reluctant adieu to Don Garcio and Victoria, and departed for Salamanca.

“ A correspondence, equally innocent as tender, commenced between Alphonso and his Victoria, and continued uninterrupted for half-a-year, when a circumstance of a most melancholy nature deprived the lovers of the only solace that could enliven the lingering hours of separation.

“ Don Garcio became suddenly and violently indisposed ; and Carlos was immediately summoned to the castle, where he arrived only in time to receive his revered father’s last sigh.

“ For several days his affectionate offspring mourned their loss with the deepest sorrow. Time, however, ameliorated their griefs, and the claims of love and friendship reminded them of Alphonso. To the surprise of Carlos, neither letter nor message were received from the former, and his friend became extremely uneasy at his apparent neglect. Too proud to write to
Alphonso,

Alphonso, to enquire the reason of this unfriendly procedure, Don Carlos passed two months at the castle, vainly endeavouring to console his sister, whose grief for the death of her father was now mingled with the agonizing suspense in which she was held by the inexplicable conduct of Alphonso.

“At the earnest entreaties of Victoria, Don Carlos was at length prevailed upon to visit the university, where, to his amazement, he learned that Don Alphonso had not returned from Zamora, whither he had gone on an excursion with a young nobleman, whose character Don Carlos had never approved of. He was a young man of rank and expectations; and many, deceived by his specious manners, had given him the reputation of being virtuous: several of the superiors of the university were, however, of a contrary opinion; they had accidentally heard enough of his private vices, to pronounce him a most dangerous hypocrite. Of these particulars Carlos was now informed,

informed, and he was shocked at his friend's having made choice of such an associate.

“ Still unwilling to condemn Alphonso for a silence that might be the effect of accident, not neglect, and having recollected that his friend had set out on this excursion several hours before the summons which announced the illness of Don Garcio had arrived at the university, Carlos was willing to conclude that Alphonso had not heard of the melancholy event which had succeeded.

“ Pleasing himself with the idea, that his friend might not yet be totally undeserving his regard, Carlos proceeded to Zamora, where all his hopes were completely annihilated.

“ Alphonso and the young nobleman, to whose name I am a stranger, the Countess not being herself acquainted with it, had left Zamora seven or eight weeks previous to the arrival of Carlos, whose surprise, anger, and concern, were strongly excited, by hearing that two handsome, but immo-

dest women, accompanied them on their tour.

“No sooner had Don Carlos received this disgusting information, than he left Zamora, and journeyed, with all possible speed, back to the castle.

“Spare me, lady Rosalia,” continued Josephine, “spare me the sad recital of the agonies which the unhappy Victoria endured, when she learned the falsehood and unworthiness of Alphonso—the tenderest care of Don Carlos could but merely preserve her life—her happiness fled for ever!

“A life of religious seclusion now became the most ardent wish of Victoria; and her brother finding it in vain to combat her intreaties and resolves, reluctantly gave his consent, and attended his lovely and unfortunate sister to the convent, where, having prevailed upon the Abbess to curtail the time of her noviciate, she shortly after took the veil.

“In this convent Victoria had, in her days of happiness, formed a sincere friendship

ship with my beloved protectress, then Donna Isabella de Riverra. This invaluable friend had accompanied her to the castle on the day on which she first beheld Don Alphonso, and was, therefore, no stranger to the accomplishments and apparent merits of her friend's regretted lover, whose perfidy, and the sad effects it had produced on the hapless Victoria, she continued to lament with sincere sorrow.

“ However, the consolatory sympathy of friendship did not long cheer the drooping spirits of Victoria; in less than three months after her admission, Donna Isabella was removed from the convent, and Victoria sunk into the deepest despondence.

“ Donna Isabella had been but a short time at Madrid, when a report prevailed there, that Donna Victoria de Gironne had fled from her convent with Don Alphonso de Avilla.

“ To this report Donna Isabella at first gave no credit, but the fact was soon proved beyond all doubt; and the whisper was general,

neral, that the Inquisition was busily employed in endeavours to trace the fugitives; they, however, remained undiscovered.

“ Donna Isabella was dreadfully shocked at the circumstance, but when she repeatedly heard that the lovers continued to elude their vigilant pursuers, and, at length, that the hope of discovering their retreat had abated, her fears ceased, and she became the wife of the Count Alvania, who had been introduced to her by her cousin, Don Hernandez de Marino.

“ From this period, three years and a half elapsed without the Countess receiving the least intelligence of her lost friend; at the expiration of this time, and while the Alvania family were residing at an elegant villa near Seragosa, a peasant one evening requested to be admitted to the presence of the Countess. My beloved protectress being then alone, ordered the man to be shown into the room where she then was. He presented a small billet, which the Countess had no sooner perused, than she

she fainted; when recovered, she ordered her favourite attendant, Paulina, to proceed with her to the cottage of the peasant, which they soon reached."

Tears and deep sighs here impeded the utterance of the sorrowful Josephine; and it was some time before the soothing sympathy of Rosalia could calm her emotion. At length she continued her mournful recital.

"In the cottage of the peasant, reclined on the bed of death, the Countess beheld her loved friend, Victoria de Gironne. Sinking on her knees beside the almost lifeless form of her unfortunate friend, the humane Countess bathed, with tears of agony, the icy hand which was freely extended to her. Yet wherefore should I dwell on that affecting interview—let it suffice to say, when the emotions of these sorrowing friends had somewhat subsided, my expiring mother presented me, then about two years old, to the Countess, who received
me

me as a sacred deposit, and solemnly vowed to protect and guide my hapless youth.

“Most truly has that most benevolent of women fulfilled the awful vow she then took, though, by the observance of it, she ran the utmost hazard of involving herself in irremediable ills. My mother’s life had been forfeited by the breach of her religious vows, and disgrace and infamy, of course, attached themselves to her unfortunate offspring.

“The most profound secrecy, in whatever related to the unhappy affair, was therefore indispensibly necessary; for the Countess well knew the Inquisition would pursue her with rigour, should her communication with, and humane attentions to, my mother, ever become known.

“Paulina, the attendant of the Countess, had a sister who had been seduced from her home, and had not been heard of from that period. The Countess was acquainted with this circumstance, and at the moment I was consigned to her benevolent care,

care, the project occurred to her of representing Donna Victoria as Inis, the sister of Paulina, and myself as the offspring of that unfortunate young woman.

“ The Countess delicately hinted this plan to my dying parent, who perfectly approved of the just precaution ; and the good Paulina, rejoicing in the opportunity she now had of testifying her affection for her amiable lady, cordially undertook to aid the deception.

“ My dear parent grew weaker every succeeding moment ; she placed a casket in the hands of the Countess, and having faltered a blessing on me, and embraced her weeping friend, she sunk into a slumber, in which she expired.

“ The Countess, overcome with the shock, was for some time insensible. Her recovery being at last effected, she was conveyed to the villa, where her indisposition was accounted for by Paulina ; who, while the domestics were extolling the singular humanity of their lady, presented me

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as the child of that sister, of whose mournful end she had just given the relation.

“Paulina, who now passed for my aunt, was universally respected; every one, therefore, exerted their efforts to console and amuse me, and to dry the tears of Paulina.

“On the third day the remains of my lamented mother were interred as those of Inis Perez; and it was generally understood, that in consequence of the compassion the Countess felt for my orphan state, and the regard she bore Paulina, she had condescended to patronise her little niece.

“My early years passed happily; the Countess continued to lavish the fondest caresses on me, and Paulina was tenderly attached to me. Unconscious of noble origin, and equally unapprized of the dreadful circumstances which had involved in one common ruin the fate of both parents and my own, I had no cause of sorrow, but when reflecting on the early privation of *that* tenderness which had fixed an impression

sion on my young heart never to be erased. At an age when children in general are apt to forget, or at most, but faintly remember the cherishers of their infant days, I wept, with keen sorrow, the recollection of those affectionate endearments I had lost for ever. The Countess indeed amply supplied the place of my lamented mother, whose image, even at this hour, my memory faithfully represents; and I feel a mournful pleasure whenever my kind protectress intimates that I resemble her.

“ At the age of five years I was placed in a convent; this change was at first productive of extreme sorrow—I was now separated from my beloved Countess, and moreover from her amiable son, who had frequently been allowed to join in my infantile amusements. Nor did the grief of Ferdinand, at parting, appear to be less than mine.

“ In this sacred retreat I remained near fourteen years, and received, by order of the Countess, an education suitable to my birth.

birth. The Abbess, though an intimate friend of my kind protectress, was not entrusted with the knowledge of my real origin. As the niece of Paulina, and the *protégée* of the Countess, she only considered me; while her great regard for that amiable lady, joined to the innate goodness of her own heart, taught her to cherish the orphan committed to her care. The favour of this worthy woman gave me some consequence in the society, and shielded me from many mortifications.

“The fate of my mother by no means prepossessed the Countess in favour of a conventual life, and all attempts to induce me to take the veil were strictly prohibited; my generous benefactress ever affirming, that when she should consider my education as perfected, she proposed to place me near her own person.

“I had just attained my fifteenth year, when the Countess announced to me the intended departure of the Count and family from Spain, and I was ordered to prepare

pare to accompany them to Italy. Much as I regretted to bid adieu to the Abbess, and many of the sisterhood, I began to prepare for this journey with sensations of pleasure; they, however, were of short duration, for the Abbess entreated the Countess to permit me to remain with her some time longer.

“ My dear benefactress could not resist the importunities of her valued friend; and though I was sensibly affected with this proof of the amiable Abbess’s regard, yet I suffered extreme sorrow on seeing the Countess depart; and the grief of that excellent lady appeared no way inferior to my own.

“ The Abbess’s affectionate regard claimed, however, my warmest gratitude, and I endeavoured to suppress my sorrowing regrets, and thenceforward devoted myself to the pleasing task of soothing the declining hours of my pious friend.

“ The three following years the Countess continued to favour me with her correspondence,

pondence, and the letters of that amiable lady were my chief delight. At the expiration of this period, the venerable Abbess died, and my benevolent protectress was no sooner informed of the melancholy event, than she dispatched Paulina to Spain, for the purpose of conducting me to Italy.

“ The Countess presented, by Paulina, a considerable donation to the new superior, and several remembrances to some of my young friends in the convent.

“ With involuntary sighs, I bade adieu to the quiet abode of my early years, and arrived at Naples about five months since.

“ I was received at the pallazo, by the Countess, with unfeigned joy, and conducted to an apartment, prepared by her orders for my reception.

“ It being generally understood in the pallazo that I had been educated in a liberal manner, purposely as a kind of companion to the Countess, my never mingling with the domestics, consequently, excited no surprise, nor curiosity.

“ Still considering myself the niece of Paulina, I was now astonished at the numberless distinctions shewn me by my supposed aunt, and ventured to intreat her to conduct herself towards me with that friendly familiarity which our relationship authorized ; but I only received vague answers, and undiminished respect.

“ When I attended mass, Paulina always accompanied me ; nor was I permitted even to walk in the gardens without her.

“ In the apartments of the Countess I passed many hours, employed in various kinds of needle-work, comprising in the society of this dear lady the height of my happiness ; the sweetness of her disposition, and the affability of her manners, had long endeared her to all the domestics—how much more so then to me, who was indebted to her bounty for every blessing in life.

“ Several weeks elapsed, during which nothing occurred to disturb the serenity of my mind. At length, being alone one evening

evening in the apartment of the Countess, busily employed at some embroidery, a footstep, crossing the room, occasioned me to look round; I saw no one, and attributing the sound to fancy, proceeded with my work, the while singing, in a low voice, a favourite canzonet of the Countess.

“An exclamation, uttered by some person near me, caused me to start from my chair, and, to my extreme surprise and confusion, I beheld an elegant young cavalier.

“My first impulse was to fly from the apartment; but the stranger, whose emotion almost equalled my own, respectfully intreated me to remain; then politely apologized for his intrusion, and requested me to inform him whether the Countess had been long out.

“Recovering from my embarrassment, I replied, the Countess had been absent several hours—then begged he would in-

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form

form me who I should acquaint my lady had wished to see her.

“ Instead of replying to my question, the cavalier hastily exclaimed—‘ Your lady! Is it possible you attend on the Countess, my mother?’

“ I answered in the affirmative, and the cavalier was proceeding to make further enquiries, when the entrance of Paulina relieved me from my awkward situation.

“ The surprise of Paulina was extreme, on perceiving the cavalier, who, leaving a slight message for the Countess, respectfully withdrew.

“ I silently resumed my work, which, however, went on but slowly; my thoughts incessantly wandered towards Signor Ferdinand. I had just beheld the companion of my early days—no longer the amiable child with whom I had passed so many happy hours, but a graceful elegant cavalier, whom I should not have known to be the son of my benefactress, had not his own expressions proclaimed him such.

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“ For the first time since my arrival in Italy, I had now beheld Signor Ferdinand; this circumstance was not singular, as I had been totally confined to the Countess’s apartments and my own. I had often wished to see the amiable companion of my childhood, but had never avowed my wishes, and I now began to accuse myself of ingratitude. It is true, I had only once seen the Count Alvania during my residence in the palazzo; but for the few years which in my infant state I had passed with the Countess in Spain, I had been unnoticed by the Count, consequently there was nothing remarkable in my not feeling a desire to behold him.

“ On the following morning I attended the Countess in her apartment, and she almost immediately began to rally me on my late interview with her son.

‘ Ferdinand has amused me extremely,’ continued the Countess, ‘ with his lively description of your terror on beholding him. On his learning, that in you he had

seen the companion of his early youth, he made me promise to permit him to apologize to you for the alarm he caused you to feel.'

"A tear of grateful pleasure stole from my eye, while I would have declined the honour intended me; but the Countess peremptorily insisted on my compliance.

"I was again seated at the embroidery, in the Countess's dressing-room, when her son entered the apartment. My involuntary confusion prevented my hearing the whole of his graceful address, or of replying to it as I ought to have done. The Countess, however, kindly allowed my embarrassment to pass unnoticed, and in a short time I regained composure. You, Signora Rosalia, too well know the amiable manners of your generous cousin, to need a detail of his various powers of pleasing—I but too soon became sensible of his merits, and trembled at my own danger.

"For several weeks I occasionally saw Ferdinand in the apartment of the Countess,

tess, who, undoubtedly, did not observe the delicate attentions he paid her unhappy *protégée*. An incident afterwards occurred, which determined me to inform my benevolent protectress of *that*, which had never been the object of her suspicions.

“ On a small table, in my own apartment, I one evening found a letter addressed to me. Though surprised at the circumstance, I could not resist the wish of perusing its contents—I opened the folds—and, to my amazement and confusion, discovered it contained a declaration of affection from Signor Ferdinand!

“ I will not attempt to describe the various emotions of my heart after I had read this epistle ; suffice it, the sense of duty predominated, and I took the earliest opportunity of informing the Signor Ferdinand of my fixed resolve, never to encourage professions inconsistent with his rank and filial obligations, as well as incompatible with the humble circumstances of one, whose chief pride and happiness it was, to

owe her *all* to the benevolent generosity of his amiable mother. I then added, I had no secrets from the Countess, and if I forbore to show her the epistle he had addressed to me, my forbearance must be attributed to the fear I had of exposing him to the displeasure of his noble parents.

“Ferdinand quitted me in extreme emotion, and my heart but too feelingly participated his sorrows. Supported, however, by the sense of having acted right, I only lamented his having bestowed a serious thought on one so much beneath him as myself. Could I have supposed our rank to be equal, and there existed no obstacle to oppose his addresses, the tender regard of Ferdinand would have formed the basis of my happiness; but, circumstanced as I was, I prized his fame, and the tranquillity of his noble family, beyond my own life.

“Soon after this incident, the Countess acquainted me with the sad history of my parents; and while I wept their sufferings, I felt my spirits soothed by the knowledge

I had

I had now gained, of my birth being not inferior to his, whom I regarded with so much esteem.

“The Countess, on the day after the recital, delivered to me the casket which had been committed to her care by my dying mother. Judge my surprise, when, on opening it, I found it contained jewels of immense value, and a small scroll of writing.

“The scroll was hastily unfolded by the Countess, who turned pale as death, and, in faltering accents, murmured severe reproaches on what she termed her own neglect.

“Almost overcome by terror, I intreated to know the cause of her agitation?

‘My dear child,’ exclaimed the Countess, in reply, ‘I fear I have acted wrong, in not examining the contents of this casket earlier.’

‘Here,’ continued she, after a pause, and directing my attention to a folded paper which had been inclosed in the scroll, ‘here

is a letter addressed to Don Carlos de Gironne; it ought to have been presented to him soon after your mother's decease. From some words she uttered immediately preceding her dissolution, I imagined the casket was not to be inspected till you had arrived at years of maturity, consequently never examined its contents. I now find I have been in an error, and shall never cease to reproach myself for the unpardonable omission. However, though I may not appear in the affair, I will secretly endeavour, by the most strenuous exertions, to remedy the evil.'

"When I could prevail on my benefactress to forbear her self-upbraidings, we proceeded to read the scroll. This, Lady Rosalia," continued Josephine, presenting to the former a large roll of paper, "this is the mournful scroll alluded to. It would be impossible for me to repeat the contents; allow me then to beg you will peruse it."

Rosalia

Rosalia received the paper from the hand of the weeping Josephine, and read as follows:

“A delightful presentiment occupies my mind—surely my Alphonso lives! The domestics of Don Felix are not yet returned—hark! I am called—Oh! that my heart may have strength to support the blissful tidings—I will believe its presages—my Alphonso yet lives!”

* * * * *

“No—my hopes are fled for ever—and yet I retain my senses! The mangled corpse of my beloved proves my misery irremediable—I am resigned—I have ruined thee, my Alphonso, and am content to endure the severity of fate.

“I will no longer seek to screen myself from the punishment which attends on the breach of my religious vows—the friendship of Don Felix is exalted—to his care I will

confide my innocent babe—hapless orphan !
—beloved Josephine, when the ashes of
thy wretched mother rest in the silent grave,
thy tears may flow over the sad story of her
errors.”

* * * * *

“ I have employed myself all the last day
and night in writing a short history of my
life, distinct from this journal—Josephine,
dear child of my heart, may the perusal of
it warn thee to avoid thy mother’s crimes.

“ Each succeeding day brings me new
proofs of the generous friendship of Don
Felix de Romna—noble-minded man ! To
him I am indebted for the preservation of
my own and my infant’s life—he found me
insensible on the skirts of the forest, with
my babe folded in my arms—he had me
conveyed to his castle, and has shown me
the most respectful and generous attentions
—he weeps with me the fate of my Al-
phonso, to whose memory he proposes to
erect a cenotaph inscribed with his vir-
tues.

“ I have just mentioned my determina-
tion

tion of delivering myself up to the Inquisition—Don Felix heard me with horror—he shall not dissuade me from my resolve—the terrors of guilt, and the agonies of remorse, rend my soul ! Don Felix ordered my child to be brought—he pleaded for the hapless babe—smiling cherub, for thy sake I will not yield myself up to the dread tribunal. A few days hence, and my benevolent protector hopes to provide me a secure asylum in a convent, of which his own sister is Abbess.

“ I am rejected—Donna Theresa, a relation of Don Felix, with whom she resides, delicately informed me, that my continuance in the castle has given rise to reports injurious to my fame ; and the Abbess, in consequence, has refused me admission. Well, to this stroke I must also submit—Alphonso, for whom alone I valued life and fame, is no more—Ah ! I had forgot my child—Oh ! agony insupportable—this disgrace will follow her.

“ Weak, credulous woman ! Why did I
ever

ever imagine Don Felix *disinterested*—he has offered me his hand—proposed having the ceremony of our nuptials privately performed. I am totally unknown to all but him, and this union, he avers, will insure perfect security to myself and my hapless infant—I have decidedly rejected his proposals—my heart is dead to affection—I will not, even to benefit my child, become a second time perjured to my religious vows. My Josephine, my sweet babe, will find protection from on High.

“I am shocked and distressed at the unceasing importunities of Don Felix—there is a want of delicacy and feeling in thus urging me to become his—I have been compelled to repeat my refusal, with some degree of severity.

“Don Felix has at length yielded to my just representations—in about three days I shall leave the castle, and be conducted to a convent in France.”

The following passages in the journal seemed to have been pursued with a tremulous

mulous hand, and, in several places, were scarcely intelligible. Rosalia having, with some difficulty, decyphered the characters, at length continued to read on :

“ Surely the distraction of my mind has pictured horrid images! It must be delusion—last night—no, I will not record a dream—it could not be reality—

“ Oh, no—no, I am not deceived—it is too true—at the hour of midnight my senses were shocked and dismayed with the sight of Don Felix, stealing, like an assassin, across my chamber—he approached—my piercing shrieks drove him hence, muttering the most dreadful execrations—Whither shall I fly! That vile Donna Theresa—she laughs at my bitter complaints and tears. My brain is distracted!—My child!—Alphonso!—Oh, Alphonso!—lost—murdered!

“ Feeble and exhausted, I have just risen from the bed of sickness—they tell me I have been ill several weeks. My child, it appears, has been carefully attended the

while—Don Felix professes contrition for the past—I will try the sincerity of this man's repentance.

“ Ah! my suspicions are confirmed—I am not permitted to quit the castle—what methods can I devise to obtain my release from this detested place—I must, I will stoop to the hateful task of dissimulation. My affected demeanour has succeeded to my wish—Don Felix expects my compliance with his proposals when my health shall be re-established—rather would I die the most painful of deaths.—But my child, my precious, my only treasure, how sweetly she smiles and prattles! Ah, beloved babe, for thy sake only do I wish to exist.

“ I will leave no means untried to accomplish my escape—to remain here is lingering torture.

“ Five anxious days have elapsed without a prospect of success—Don Felix has renewed his ungenerous persecutions.

“ Oh, merciful Providence! Last night I discovered a secret passage—I am convinced,

vinced, by the ways I then explored, that it leads beyond the castle walls.

“Cottage in Arragon.

“I effected my escape—I wandered, with my hapless babe, three days through the Pyrenees. At length, exhausted almost to death, I encountered some friendly muleteers, who conveyed me to Seragosa—Isabella de Riverra, my dear, my valued friend, has an estate near.

“I will apply to her to protect my child; for myself, human aid can now be of no avail. Already do I feel the icy hand of death! Scarcely had I strength to scrawl the few lines I just now dispatched by the owner of the cottage which shelters my sinking frame—Oh, Isabella, friend of my youth, companion of my happy days, attend to my dying supplications—hasten to receive my last sigh, and——”

Here

Here the scroll concluded; Rosalia mingled her pitying tears with the filial sorrow of Josephine; the former paid the tribute of humanity to the sufferings of the unhappy Victoria, while the latter wept over the misfortunes and the memory of an unfortunate and departed parent.

When Josephine had regained some degree of composure, she resumed her mournful narration.

“The Countess appeared greatly affected, while perusing the scroll, and when she had concluded, she renewed her regrets and self-reproaches. In vain we searched for the manuscript which my lamented mother had mentioned contained the history of her life; the jewels, the scroll, and a miniature picture of my father, were the only contents of the casket.

“When the Countess confided to me the secret of my real origin, she gave me a strict charge never to divulge it; as there was, she said, but too much reason to fear that my uncle, Don Carlos, would extend
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the implacable resentment he bore his sister to her unfortunate offspring. His indignation and rage at the elopement of his sister, the Countess informed me, exceeded all bounds; and he solemnly vowed never to forgive or behold her more.

‘Had I comprehended the meaning of my dying friend’s words,’ said the Countess, after perusing the scroll, ‘I should most assuredly have devised means for the delivery of the letter she addressed to her brother; yet there never was any ground to hope the effect might have been favourable to you; and if I think my own conduct reprehensible, it is only for not strictly fulfilling her last injunctions. Even then, the utmost secrecy for the security of my own person was necessary; for in the apparent disposition of Don Carlos, to have openly appeared in the affair, would have been to expose myself to the fury of his unabated rage, and thence draw upon me the rigorous judgments of the Inquisition. It is an affair which, even at this late period, I dare

dare not personally interfere in ; since, from all I can learn, Don Carlos still maintains an inveterate resentment against the authors of your existence ; he being still ignorant of the demise of his sister, as also of the fate of your unfortunate father, who has never been heard of since the time Donna Victoria eloped from her convent.

“ The Countess ceased her interesting discourse, and soon after left me to my own reflections. Deeply affected by a review of the melancholy incidents detailed by my unfortunate parent, I was for some time susceptible of sorrow only for her distresses ; time, however, alleviated my grief, and my thoughts again involuntarily turned on Ferdinand.

“ Three weeks elapsed, during the course of which I neither saw nor heard of him. At length I ventured to ask Paulina whether the Signor Ferdinand was absent from the pallazo ?

“ Her reply was in the affirmative ; she added, he was on a visit to the Marchese di

di Romanzini, at Orenza Castle. Impelled by more than ordinary curiosity, I asked several questions respecting the family of the Marchese, and heard, with a sensation of pain, that Ferdinand purposed to reside chiefly at the castle, and that Signora di Romanzini, the daughter of the Marchese, possessed irresistible attractions.

“ This information made me keenly sensible of the misery of my own situation, and also determined me to engage the Countess, if possible, to place me in a convent. The return of Ferdinand, however, prevented the immediate execution of my intention.

“ I was walking in the gardens on the evening of the day on which he returned to the pallazo ; Paulina being much indisposed, had not then accompanied me. While moving slowly on, ruminating on the peculiarity of my own circumstances, and pensively regarding the last rays of the setting sun, I was startled from my reverie by the sudden appearance of Ferdinand.

My

My first impulse was to fly; but, struck with the dejection so visible in the air of Ferdinand, I hesitated, and had no longer the power to attempt a retreat. The Countess was then engaged abroad; Paulina was confined to her own apartment; the rest of the domestics were employed in the palazzo; observation, therefore, was not to be dreaded.

“ With all the sophistry of self-delusion, I permitted myself to be prevailed on to continue in the gardens; vainly hoping, that by remonstrances on the impropriety of the pursuit, I might induce Ferdinand to desist from his rash procedure.

“ But what was the result of this imprudent conference? Alas! the respectful address, the importunate intreaties of Ferdinand, pleaded so powerfully in his behalf, that, at length, I confided to him the secret of my noble origin. The joy which animated his countenance on receiving this information, convinced me of my own imprudence,

prudence, and I terminated our interview as speedily as possible.

“ When I regained my apartment, I wept bitterly ; the more I reflected on what had passed, the more conscious I became of the impropriety with which I had acted. I had informed Ferdinand of my birth being noble ; and that my parents, who had been unfortunate, were no more ; but I had not detailed the particulars of their mournful story, nor intimated the fears the Countess reasonably entertained, of my being persecuted by an unrelenting relative, should he ever discover in me the offspring of a union he had never ceased to reprobate. By this disingenuous procedure, I had encouraged the hopes of Ferdinand, while my own heart confessed the improbability of their ever being accomplished. I well knew that the Count Alvanio would never allow his only son to wed the degraded orphan of the proscribed Alphonso and Victoria de Avilla.

“ These agonizing reflections completely
subdued

subdued my mind, and I sunk into a state of insensibility, in which I was found by my benevolent protectress, who, on her return from her visit, had sought my apartment.

“ When I recovered, I found myself supported by the Countess, who tenderly enquired the cause of my late swoon. Grief and shame suppressed the disclosure of the truth, and I could utter only intreaties to be immediately placed in a convent.

“ The Countess for some time gently opposed my repeated requests ; at length, however, she reluctantly agreed to comply with them ; though she forbore not to express her astonishment at my having formed so singular a wish as that of leaving her.

“ On the following day the Countess, with her wonted gentleness, demanded of me, whether I persisted in my wish for religious retirement ? Being answered by me in the affirmative, she proposed my residing in the convent of Benedictines, situated near her own residence, where I should
remain,

remain, she added, until her next visit to Orenza, when she would accompany me to, and place me within the sacred walls of Santa Maria.

“ A few days after this arrangement, I was conducted to my new abode, where for some time I inwardly applauded the resistance which honour and gratitude had opposed to the weakness of my own heart; likewise, for having had recourse to a measure which could not fail to put a final stop to the importunities of Ferdinand Alvanio.

“ In the last particular, however, I too soon found myself deceived: Ferdinand appeared at the convent, and continued to repeat his visits, on various pretexts; sometimes accompanying the Countess, but more frequently alone. In these visits no opportunity was afforded him of a private interview; at length, by successfully bribing the portress, by her means he conveyed a letter to me. This letter breathed a repetition of the sentiments contained in his former epistle; he renewed therein the offer

of his hand, and concluded with solemnly conjuring me not to reveal, at least for some time, the secret of his heart to the Countess. This letter of Ferdinand's threw me into a most perplexing dilemma. The secrecy he required implied a dread of unhappy consequences, should the Countess be informed of the sentiments he privately professed to entertain for me.

“To me it appeared probable, that maternal tenderness might induce that affectionate mother to regard with indulgence the youthful imprudence of a beloved son ; but should the secret of the unhappy predilection be made known to the Count Alvanio, the effects of his wounded pride and heated resentment were greatly to be feared.

“Was it therefore possible for me to expose Ferdinand to the effects of an anger so reasonably dreaded? or was it consistent with the deep sense I entertained of the vast obligations the Countess had heaped on me, to permit the clandestine addresses of her son? My heart recoiled alike from
each

each idea. On delivering the letter, the portress had required me to prepare an answer; I felt the impropriety of writing, but to remain silent, might subject me to further solicitations. After a short deliberation, I concluded it would be best, therefore, to declare my decided resolve; and I accordingly returned an answer to Ferdinand, calculated, as I then imagined, to put a period to his unauthorised pursuit.

“On the following day I received another billet; the ardent and persuasive expression it contained, convinced me that my late representations had proved of no avail; and for several weeks afterwards, Ferdinand continued to distress me alternately with visits and letters.

“At length the contending emotions of my mind were productive of a severe indisposition; at the commencement of which, the portress, alarmed by the fear of discovery, acquainted Ferdinand that my illness was caused by his persevering in

addresses which it plainly appeared I did not approve.

“ This information produced a few lines, from Ferdinand, in which he solemnly promised never to address me for the future, unless, indeed, he should obtain my permission.

“ Relieved from his solicitations, I gradually recovered my health, to the delight of my generous benefactress, who little suspected what had occasioned my illness.

“ I was just recovering from my indisposition, when I heard, Signora, of your arrival at Naples—your fame soon reached the convent; I also heard that Ferdinand constantly accompanied your steps; and, though I felt not the sensation of envy, I could not restrain my tears, at the comparative view of the felicity of your lot and the unhappiness of mine.

“ The Countess proposed introducing me to your notice, but as I feared such a step might draw me again into the society
of

of Ferdinand, I declined the honour, with a repugnance so visible, that my beneficent friend never resumed the subject.

“The invariable silence, and the discontinuance of visits I had exacted, was now rigidly observed by Ferdinand; and many weeks elapsed without my either seeing or hearing from him.

“Melancholy and dejected, I daily wandered through the dark cloisters, and my mind insensibly became attached to the idea of devoting the remainder of my life to religious seclusion; the recollection of my mother’s fate, alone deterred me from declaring to the Countess what I then thought was the predominant wish of my soul.

“I was in this frame of mind, when the Countess intimated to me her intended departure from Naples, and, at the same time, proposed my accompanying her to the villa Alvanio. This I declined; but I had not then learned that it was the intention of Ferdinand to remain at the palazzo. In

not assenting to the proposition of my benefactress, I soon discovered I had acted imprudently; for scarcely had she quitted Naples, when her son renewed his addresses with increased ardour.

“Notwithstanding every argument employed by Ferdinand, I still preserved strength of resolution to persist in refusing my consent to a private marriage. At length, after repeated summonses from the Countess, he was obliged to hasten to the villa.

“Ferdinand had been absent from Naples about a week, when one evening, just after vespers, I was informed a stranger waited to speak to me at the gate.

“I attended, and observed I was permitted to receive my visitor alone. On seeing the man, I instantly recognised in him a servant of Ferdinand's. He handed me a small billet, which I had no sooner perused, than, almost overcome with terror, I scarcely retained sense. At that moment the portress entered, and, in a whisper,

per, informed me she knew all. ‘The Signor Ferdinand,’ she continued, ‘is mortally wounded—he is only a few paces from the convent—can you deny his request to close his dying eyes?’

“More dead than alive, I yielded to the suggestions of the portress, who conducted me, by a private way, through the gardens, into a narrow lane behind the convent walls; down this lane I was hurried by my conductress, and the man who had brought the billet—a carriage was in waiting, into which I was suddenly lifted. Unable to support the shock, I fainted.

“The motion of the carriage restored me to animation, and the voice of Ferdinand, in soothing accents, struck my ear. The whole truth now appeared—I had been decoyed, betrayed: my indignation at the deception that had been practised, and my sorrow at finding myself thus the dupe of it, were excessive.

“While I expressed my resentment at his ungenerous proceedings, Ferdinand heard

me in silence. At length, in an agitated and hurried tone, he said—

‘ You condemn this step, Josephine, without knowing my motives for it. Hear me, I conjure you !—Two days since, my father commanded me to receive the hand of my amiable relative, Signora di Romanzini ; and though, when assured of the mutual indifference that subsists between my cousin and myself, he seemed to resign the hopes he had indulged, yet he afterwards privately informed me, that if he should find the Marchese still anxious for this long projected union, he would then insist on my obedience. Thus circumstanced, my Josephine, can you still blame me for pursuing the only method I could devise, to prevent our being separated for ever ? Rendered desperate by the idea of being compelled to relinquish you, I obtained leave to visit Naples. I left the villa yesterday, and in the hope that my ardent entreaties would prevail on you to become mine, and thus ensure the felicity of my future days,

I formed

I formed and executed the scheme you so severely condemn. You cannot but perceive,' he continued, 'the impossibility of my conducting you back to the convent, and unless you consent to accompany me to the village where——'

"While Ferdinand spoke, my agitation was extreme; I could scarcely support the shock of hearing, that he was destined to become the husband of another, but much less the agony of my feelings, at his having supposed me capable of receding from those sentiments I had repeatedly avowed, and as often solemnly assured him I would ever adhere to.

'I am perfectly sensible,' interrupted I, 'that my return to the convent is impracticable—your imprudent conduct has left me but one alternative—I insist on being conducted to the villa.'

"Finding that no argument he could use had power to alter my resolves, he at length gave orders to drive to the villa, which, having reached, he led me through

a private door, and then into a small saloon; where he silently quitted me. I had been alone but a few minutes; when the Countess entered; her surprise on beholding me was extreme; judge how much it increased, when, falling at her feet, and in a voice rendered almost inarticulate by my tears, I detailed the progress of her son's attachment to me; and concluded with informing her of the events of the evening.

“ You, Signora, may conceive what were my emotions, when my dear protectress tenderly raised me from the floor, and said every thing her feeling heart could suggest, to sooth the agonies of my mind. Far from indicating the slightest displeasure at my having so long concealed the sentiments her son professed to entertain for me, she warmly commended the steadiness with which I had withstood his repeated solicitations, and continued to console me with the kindest assurances of unabated friendship.

“ Your

“ Your entrance, Signora, happened at the moment when the Countess expressed an anxious wish to behold you. Ah, the instant you appeared, my heart warmly inclined me to solicit your favour.”

“ That you will ever be the object of my esteem and friendship,” returned Rosalia, “ there can be no doubt. The just principles that direct your conduct, will ever insure to you the admiration and respect of all who know you. A short time hence,” continued she, “ we shall depart for Orenza; there my Josephine will indeed find friends, who, in virtue and benevolence, resemble her amiable Countess, and who will exert all their power and interest to serve her.”

The entrance of Biancha, with some slight refreshments, prevented further conversation on the late subject. The discourse then turned on the Madre Santa Clara. To the just praises Rosalia bestowed on the amiable Abbess, Josephine listened with

unfeigned pleasure, while she anticipated, in idea, the tranquil serenity that awaited her within the sacred walls of Santa Maria.

CHAP. XVI.

HAVING partook of the refreshments, Rosalia and Josephine retired to the boudoir. Here, after dwelling awhile on the virtues of her beloved relatives and friends, the former recounted to her attentive auditor all she was acquainted with, relative to the death of the Marchesa, the loss of her lamented brother, and the consequent sufferings of the Marchese.

That the Marchesa, her deeply regretted
mother,

mother, had expired soon after her birth, and that, a short time after that melancholy event, Vivonio had been stolen from his parental home, were all that Rosalia had ever heard of. To the more shocking particulars relating to the former circumstance, she was still a stranger.

In speaking of her introduction to the gay world at Naples, she mentioned the Count Guidoni--her hesitation--her blushes, while pronouncing his name, escaped not the penetration of Josephine ; and the heart of Rosalia was soon open to the inspection of her friend.

The entrance of the Countess gave a turn to the conversation ; that amiable lady beheld with pleasure the glow of mutual friendship that animated the countenances of Rosalia and Josephine, and expressed the satisfaction she experienced in the most lively terms.

An hour had glided away unperceived, when the Countess was compelled, reluctantly,

antly, to withdraw, in order to join the Count and Don Hernandez at supper.

Nothing material occurred during the remainder of the evening ; on the following morning, Rosalia, who could no longer absent herself from the family, descended to the saloon to breakfast.

On entering the apartment, she was met by Don Hernandez, who, while leading her to a chair, complimented her on her recovery in the most insinuating terms. The Count Alvania was polite, but rather cold in his address to her, while the expressive eyes of Ferdinand seemed to ask a thousand questions respecting his Josephine.

Several days had passed, unmarked by any material occurrence, when affairs of consequence called the Count to Naples, whither Don Hernandez accompanied him.

As the Countess entertained very few visitors in the absence of the Count, the villa was now almost deserted. Rosalia, for several days past, had anxiously expected

pected to hear from Orenza, but no answer to the Count's letter had yet arrived; another messenger was therefore dispatched, with a packet from Rosalia, who endeavoured to patiently await his return.

On the evening of the messenger's departure, the Countess being engaged in writing to the Count, and Ferdinand being absent, Josephine obtained permission to accompany Rosalia in a walk through the romantic groves that surrounded the villa.

Charmed with the delightful views, and unmindful of the declining light, they had strayed to a considerable distance, when the last rays of the setting sun sunk in the western wave. The sudden appearance of Ferdinand allayed those fears which had begun to pervade the bosoms of the fair friends.

With the most animated looks of surprise and pleasure, Ferdinand resigned his horse to the care of his servant, and was quickly by the side of Josephine, expressing

ing the happiness he experienced from the fortunate encounter.

Conscious that this interview had not been premeditated, neither Rosalia nor Josephine felt inclined to repress the satisfaction which the appearance of Ferdinand had excited; nor were either sensible, that when he pointed out the distant sail, faintly distinguished by the light of the moon, or the shadowy tints on the swelling waters of the bay, he was only seeking to protract the moment of separation.

At length the lights in the windows of the villa appeared sometimes visible through the thick myrtles, and Rosalia reminding her companion that the Countess might be alarmed at their absence, the party immediately hastened their return to the villa, at the entrance of which they separated; Josephine retired to her own apartment, while Ferdinand and Rosalia proceeded to the saloon.

On entering the apartment, Rosalia al-
most

most instantly found herself in the arms of the Marchese.

“My father! my beloved father!” cried the delighted Rosalia, as she bent with filial reverence to receive the paternal benediction.

“Child of my love, dear Rosalia,” softly ejaculated the enraptured parent; compose yourself—let not my unexpected appearance thus affect you.”

The heart of Rosalia was too full for reply. The Marchese, in gentle accents, soothed her filial emotion, and conducting her to a chair, placed himself on a seat beside her.

It was then she learned that the Marchese had arrived only a few minutes prior to her entrance. She enquired earnestly after the health of the Duke, and also that of Santa Clara: the answers she received were perfectly satisfactory; and shortly after the conversation became general.

Supper being speedily announced, the
remainder

remainder of the evening passed in social converse, no opportunity occurring for the discussion of private concerns.

The Marchese being extremely fatigued with his late journey, retired early to rest ; Rosalia, and the Alvania party, soon followed his example.

When Rosalia, on the following morning, entered the breakfast-room, she perceived the Count Alvania and Don Hernandez, both of whom had just returned from Naples, in earnest discourse with the Marchese ; the conversation ceased on her approach.

The Marchese was, as usual, affectionately attentive to his beloved child. The Count was polite and animated, and Don Hernandez respectfully assiduous, though he frequently embarrassed Rosalia by his scrutinizing gaze. After breakfast the Countess and Rosalia were preparing to withdraw, when the Marchese, in a low voice, desired the latter to attend him in
another

another apartment. Trembling, she curts-eyed obedience, and immediately followed her father.

The Marchese, after some slight observations on the beautiful situation of the villa, and several other trifling remarks, which were evidently intended to afford his daughter an opportunity to recover her composure, said—"You have determined then, my Rosalia; to reject the addresses of your cousin?"

"The uniform indulgence, my father," answered Rosalia, with blushes and hesitation, "the affectionate solicitude you have ever expressed for the happiness of your Rosalia, have encouraged her to hope that her rejection of the alliance will not offend, as her heart cannot submissively accord with your wishes."

The Marchese remained silent a few moments—he affectionately took the hand of Rosalia—"You are then, my child," said he, "perfectly indifferent to the merits of your amiable cousin?"

Rosalia,

Rosalia, who had tremblingly expected to hear the name of Guidoni, now regained her courage, and replied, "As a relative, my Lord, Ferdinand will ever possess my sincerest regard; yet had I entertained for him other sentiments than those of esteem and friendship, I should have been most unfortunate."

She then informed the Marchese of the attachment subsisting between Ferdinand and Josephine.

As she spoke, the glow of heartfelt satisfaction appeared on the cheek of the Marchese, and he commended the artless warmth with which his lovely daughter pleaded the cause of friendship; but he forbore to express his judgment of the Countess's conduct, respecting Josephine, whom he extremely wished to behold; his great regard for Ferdinand rendering him anxiously desirous of observing a young female, whose pretensions were, the Marchese thought, rather imprudently sanctioned by the Countess.

On

On the Marchese signifying his wish to see Josephine, Rosalia promised to prepare her friend for the interview. The former then presented to his daughter a letter from her revered Santa Clara; and Rosalia, after expressing her artless thanks to the Marchese for his indulgent goodness, in permitting her to decline the alliance, withdrew.

When Rosalia entered her apartment, she found the Countess conversing with Josephine. Each directed her attention to the lovely girl, who immediately acquainted her beloved Countess with what had passed in her late interview with the Marchese.

A smile of pleasure played on the expressive features of the Countess, on hearing that the Marchese seemed disposed to interest himself for her *protégée*, and she soon withdrew to discourse with him on the subject.

The Countess had been gone about half an hour, when Josephine was summoned to attend

attend her; the presence of Rosalia was also requested.

The efforts of the latter to sooth the agitated spirits of her amiable friend, were of no effect; pale and trembling, she accompanied Rosalia to an apartment where the Countess and the Marchese di Romanzini were seated.

Both arose on the entrance of the young ladies, and the Countess immediately taking the hand of Josephine, presented her to the Marchese, who received her with the most friendly and delicate politeness.

The Countess had very briefly detailed to the Marchese the leading incidents relative to her fair *protégée*; and now she requested Josephine to permit that nobleman to view the picture found in the casket. This request was instantly complied with; for Josephine constantly wore the miniature.

The Marchese surveyed the portrait with emotion—"It must be so," softly ejaculated he; then, as if fearful of having said too much, he paused for a few moments, and then

then proceeded—" Signora Josephine," said he, "I will not attempt to say how much I admire and respect the noble propriety which has hitherto marked your conduct. I consider my Rosalia as truly fortunate, in having for a friend, a young lady possessed of so much virtue and prudence. Allow me to assure you of my perfect esteem; and believe me when I say, I hope to see your troubles speedily terminated."

Tears of gratitude bedewed the cheek of Josephine; she could scarcely command words to express the deep sense she entertained of the Marchese's kindness. Rosalia, however, amply compensated for the deficiency of her friend, by the animation and tenderness with which she thanked the Marchese for his commendations of her Josephine.

Mutually grateful and happy, the young friends withdrew; and the Marchese immediately hastened to seek the Count Alvania, whom he found with Don Hernandez in the saloon.

Don

Dón Hernandez politely formed some slight excuse to withdraw. They were no sooner alone, than the Marchese, addressing the Count Alvania in the most friendly terms, regretted that all hopes of an alliance between their families were now at an end.

“I assure you, my dear Count,” continued the Marchese, “on receiving your letter, I was in no small degree shocked at the information it contained; nor was the Duke less affected. We, like yourself, had fondly indulged the idea that Rosalia regarded her amiable cousin with the most favourable sentiments. Our affections, however, are not always directed by our judgments. I hope Ferdinand will not be severely pained by this disappointment—a disappointment, I assure you, my friend, equally unlooked for by the Duke and me, as by yourself, and one which I sincerely lament. I was too much concerned at the circumstance, to be able to answer your letter; I hastened to the villa, determined personally

personally to express my regrets on the subject, and allow me to hope our ancient friendship may not be interrupted by this unforeseen event."

"Be assured, my Lord," replied the Count, "I feel too much honoured by your friendship, to permit any circumstance, however important, to render me unsollicitous for a continuance of your favourable regard. I hope I am not so degradingly selfish as to suffer the high esteem I bear you, my Lord, to be effaced by the care you justly take of an inestimable daughter's happiness. I am, indeed, severely grieved," continued the Count, "at the disappointment of my hopes; yet the happiness of Signora Rosalia is a consideration too important for me to wish her to become the bride of my son, in opposition to her own inclinations. We must patiently submit to our fate. May Signora Rosalia," the Count added, with emotion, "may she enjoy that felicity which my Ferdinand, I fear, has lost for ever."

The Marchese felt the truest uneasiness on observing the agitation and chagrin of the Count, and was no less surprised at hearing him aver that Ferdinand regarded Rosalia with tender affection.

The Marchese said every thing in his power to alter this opinion, yet he spoke with great caution, fearful lest a word should drop that might convey to the Count an intimation of his son's predilection for Josephine, a subject on which the Countess had requested his silence.

In a short time the emotion of the Count subsided; and the Marchese, at his pressing entreaties, consented to pass a week at the villa.

On re-entering her apartment, Rosalia, while Josephine was employed in arranging some music, began to peruse the epistle of Santa Clara, the contents of which wounded her to the heart.

The amiable Abbess tenderly hinted her suspicions, that her beloved Rosalia had not written to her with that candour for
which

which she had ever been distinguished—
“There is a restraint in your stile, my Rosalia,” wrote Santa Clara, “which I cannot avoid saying has caused me uneasiness. Ah, my child! if the noble ingenuousness of your nature has yielded to the sophistry of the world, with what agony shall I reflect upon the fatal earnestness with which I urged the Marchese to consent to your residing at Naples! Beware, my Rosalia, beware of the shadow of concealment; nothing is so fatal to the happiness and reputation of youth. Your rank and situation particularly enjoins circumspection; reflect, my dearest child, if you refuse your confidence to those attached to you by every natural and moral tie, you will soon cease to love or reverence them; and ingratitude and deceit will usurp the dominion of innocence, filial love, and every other amiable and endearing quality. You will weep when you read these lines—you will say, how severe!—but believe me, Rosalia, I have drawn too just a picture of human
N 2 nature;

nature ; and remember, the happiness of Rosalia will form the earthly felicity of her friends, and should she fail in her affection and duty, every hope would vanish, and only in the tomb of her sainted mother, would those who were once most dear to Rosalia cease to weep their sorrows."

Sighs of agonizing grief burst from the lips of Rosalia, while perusing the foregoing lines, and before she had concluded reading the epistle, she sunk on her couch, overwhelmed with terror and shame. The idea of Guidoni now made her tremble, and she inwardly vowed to confess her folly to her revered friend, and to exert, henceforward, every possible endeavour to banish his image from her mind.

For some time she continued insensible to the anxious enquiries of the alarmed Josephine, who, with tender solicitude, sought to calm her emotion. Rosalia at length presented her the letter of Santa Clara, and Josephine, with sentiments of respect and
veneration

veneration for the writer, read the serious advice it contained.

“If any thing could increase the respectful regard I entertain for the amiable Abbess,” said Josephine, “it would be this letter. Dear lady Rosalia, why do you weep? There is nothing so dreadful in all this. The excellent woman who feels so much for your happiness, does not mean to imply that this portrait suits her Rosalia. Perhaps she has too forcibly delineated the consequences that generally attend imprudent concealments; but the heart of Rosalia is open to her friends. The Countess is no stranger to the artless predilection you entertain for the Count Guidoni; even I have been honoured with the knowledge of your sentiments; and surely, my friend, surely you must be convinced that the Countess will explain every thing, so as to leave no doubt of the innocent and noble mind of Rosalia being free from dissimulation. She well knows, that delicacy and timidity alone prevented your confiding the

secret of your heart to your revered Santa Clara."

"Dear Josephine," answered Rosalia, "how infinitely superior to your unhappy friend are you in every respect. Alas! why did I leave the tranquil abode of my early days—why engage in the tumultuous scenes of life, when I possess neither resolution nor fortitude to support me through the trials which too generally occur in an intercourse with the world?"

"You deceive yourself, Signora, with respect to the qualities of your own mind," replied Josephine; "I have heard of too many instances of your firmness and resolution, to allow me to adopt the idea, that one who has ever been most exemplary for the strict performance of moral and religious duties, can want fortitude to resist a transient impression."

Rosalia remained silent—her heart only replied to the observations of Josephine—that whispered, there was a material difference between the perseverance she had shown,

shown, in sacrificing her own pleasure to the satisfaction or ease of the beloved inmates of Santa Maria, or in performing the humane office of watching beside the couch of an expiring friend, to the strength of resolution required to erase from her mind the loved image of Guidoni. In the fulfilling of those duties, her inclination had kept pace with her actions; but in renouncing all idea of Guidoni, she should act expressly contrary to her heart; Rosalia, however, was truly sensible of the kind intention of Josephine, and her reason assured her, that it was her duty to resign every hope relative to the Count.

A mournful serenity followed this conviction, and Rosalia seized the first opportunity of changing the discourse. At dinner, the Marchese silently observed the melancholy air of Rosalia, and attributed it to the contents of the letter she had received, though he by no means suspected the purport.

Rosalia heard with regret, that the Mar-

chese had consented to prolong his stay for some days at the villa. No longer daring to think of Guidoni, she became impatient to quit a place which continually reminded her of him; and though reluctant to bid the Countess adieu, yet she knew, that after the departure of Don Hernandez she might hope to have the happiness of that lady's company at Orenza.

At the request of the Countess, it had been settled, that Josephine should accompany the Marchese, and his daughter, to the castle; from whence, it was designed, that Josephine should immediately retire to the convent of Santa Maria. To this arrangement, which would separate him from his adored Josephine, Ferdinand most reluctantly yielded, while the truly amiable object of his cares submitted with modest firmness, only requesting to be permitted to pursue her journey in the same carriage with Biancha, as she felt extremely unwilling to attract that notice which her accompanying Rosalia might excite.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

THE few days the Marchese continued at the villa, were passed in a round of pleasure. Rosalia, however, heartily rejoiced, as she beheld the period of her return to Orenza approach.

On the evening preceding the day fixed for the departure of the Marchese and his daughter, Ferdinand obtained a short interview with his Josephine ; she listened to his ardent protestations of eternal love with emotions of mingled hope and fear ; and mournfully conscious of the many obstacles which might impede their union, en-

deavoured to conceal the sorrow with which the approaching separation filled her heart. But when the moment arrived in which Josephine was to receive the parting embrace of her beloved protectress, all the maternal care and benevolent kindness of that amiable woman, were remembered by her grateful *protégée*, whose emotions then almost overpowered her senses.

The repeated assurances given by the Countess of visiting Orenza, at length composed her agitated mind, and the affectionate solicitude of Rosalia succeeded in reconciling her to the unavoidable separation.

As the Marchese had signified his intention to commence his journey at the dawn of day, the family assembled in the breakfast-room long before sun-rise. An air of melancholy pervaded every countenance, and when the carriages were announced, and the Countess arose to embrace Rosalia, their mutual emotion affected the whole party; amongst whom, Don Hernandez
appeared

appeared considerably agitated. As he led Rosalia to the carriage, his hand trembled, and when he uttered his regrets and adieus, his voice faltered, and his words were scarcely articulate.

The fortitude with which Rosalia had bade farewell to the enchanting scenes of the villa Alvania, forsook her, when seated beside her father; she viewed, perhaps for the last time, those delightful shades where the image of Guidoni presided, and she could no longer restrain the tears of painful, yet pleasing, retrospection.

The Marchese, with extreme concern, observed her emotion; for the first time, the suspicion of his daughter's having some secret cause of sorrow, glanced on his mind—the idea alarmed him. During the few days he had resided at the villa, he had perceived an air of singular dejection occasionally shade her expressive countenance; this unusual appearance, joined to the aversion she showed to mixing in the gay parties formed at the villa, had excited an opi-

nion, that her residence there had become peculiarly disagreeable; the Marchese had therefore hoped that her removal would restore her tranquillity; what then was his astonishment, to behold her evidently absorbed in grief, on quitting a place to which he imagined she had imbibed a dislike!

The road led round the plantations which partly encompassed the foot of the eminence on which the temple stood; at sight of this sweet recess, rendered peculiarly interesting by the remembrance of Guidoni, the tears of Rosalia increased.

Concealing the surprise and concern which the grief of his daughter occasioned, the Marchese endeavoured to calm her uneasiness, while he, for the present, suppressed his wish of enquiring into the cause of it.

Deeply affected by the indulgent kindness of her father, and blushing at her own weakness, Rosalia checked her tears, and strove to assume an air of serenity; yet

her countenance was but too frequently expressive of pensive melancholy.

During the remainder of the journey, the Marchese anxiously watched every turn of his daughter's varying features, and at length experienced the mournful conviction of her being the prey of a secret sorrow, which had undermined her happiness.

A faint glow of animation diffused itself over her cheek, as she distinguished the lofty turrets of the castle rising above the majestic pines, and her heart again beat with filial rapture, while her fancy anticipated the parental welcome of its venerable owner.

With tears of grateful rapture, Rosalia soon found the pleasing vision realized. The good old Duke, supported by the aged Bernardo, met the Marchese and his daughter at the ancient gate, where the domestics were assembled to welcome the arrival of their beloved Signora, and her truly revered parent.

The return of the lovely heiress diffused
cheerfulness,

cheerfulness, and innocent mirth, through the lofty halls of the castle; the smile that illumined the face of the venerable Orenza, and the honest indications of joy testified by the faithful domestics, spoke to the innocent heart of Rosalia, and she participated in the general satisfaction, with a degree of serene happiness to which she had been long a stranger.

On retiring to her own apartment, she there found Josephine waiting her appearance. The latter had declined joining the party of the Duke, until her story should be made known to him. An apartment, adjoining that of Rosalia, had been prepared for her reception, but she could not retire to rest without first seeing her amiable friend.

On the following morning, after breakfast, Rosalia detailed to the Duke the particulars of Josephine's history; and that humane nobleman assured her, he would exert all his interest to obtain an order from the court

court of Spain, to restore to the innocent young sufferer the large estates forfeited by the crime of her father, Don Alphonso de Avilla.

The Duke then advised, that Josephine, in the mean time, should fix her residence at Santa Maria; as that step would preclude the necessity of continuing under her present assumed humiliating character.

The Marchese, who was present, had just begun to propose the making Father Albertini a confidant in the affair, when that pious man entered the apartment.

After the Father had expressed, in animated terms, the pleasure he experienced on beholding the Marchese and Rosalia once more the inhabitants of Orenza, Di Romanzini led to the concerns of the hapless Josephine.

Albertini was too well acquainted with the humane disposition of the Marchese, to be surprised at his affording protection to the unfortunate; and when the latter enquired

quired of the Father, whether he would wish to see his fair *protégée*, Albertini assented, with evident satisfaction.

An attendant was then ordered to inform Signora Josephine that her presence was desired.

“I think, Father,” said the Marchese, “you have often mentioned having resided in Spain—probably you may not be a stranger to the parents of this amiable young lady, who possesses virtue and beauty sufficient to interest the coldest heart; and I may venture to say——”

The entrance of the blushing Josephine interrupted the Marchese, who instantly arose, and taking her hand, presented her to the Duke, by whom she was received in the kindest manner; and to whose polite and friendly compliments she replied with modest grace and respectful gratitude.

The Marchese had observed, that the moment Josephine appeared, Albertini gazed on her with looks of wild astonishment;

ment ; on hearing her speak, his agitation evidently increased ; and when the Marchese led her towards him, he uttered a heart-rending sigh, and fixing his expressive eyes on Di Romanzini, he exclaimed—
“ You are deceiving me—it is impossible ! ”

“ Her name is Josephine de Avilla,” said the Marchese.

“ My child ! my child ! ” cried the astonished and enraptured Albertini, as he clasped the almost fainting form of the amazed Josephine. “ Revive, revive, my Josephine,” he added, in tremulous accents, “ image of my lost Victoria, revive and bless thy happy parent.”

“ Oh merciful Providence ! ” faintly articulated Josephine, “ am I indeed supported by a father’s arm ? Oh, Rosalia—kind, generous friends—assure me that my happiness is real ! ”

“ The moment I became acquainted with your story,” said the Marchese, in reply to Josephine, “ I was certain, that in you I
should

should behold the daughter of my invaluable friend ; though I did not think myself then at liberty to communicate the circumstance to the Countess Alvanio. Years are past," he continued, "since I first listened to the recital of the woes of Alphonso and Victoria."

"Your mother," fearfully enquired Albertini, "tell me—does she live?"

The tears of Josephine answered this question.

The Father, with a look of pious resignation, raised his eyes to Heaven ; then turning to his daughter, "pardon me, my dearest child," said he ; "I cannot behold these tears—I bend in submission to the Divine will. Blessed shade of my beloved Victoria—may'st thou witness the felicity of this moment ! My generous, my benevolent friend !" continued Albertini, addressing the Marchese, "inform me how I am again in possession of a treasure I had long since considered as no more?"

"The

“The history of your child, my friend,” returned the Marchese, “you must learn from Rosalia, who, I understand, is acquainted with every circumstance relating to Josephine; whom, should we trust to repeat the detail, I fear she would never do justice to her own merits. At present I will inform you, that to the noble and disinterested friendship of the Countess Alvanio, you are indebted for the fond and affectionate care your daughter has experienced from the age of two years. The regard that amiable lady entertained for Donna Victoria, manifested its sincerity in her maternal protection of her child.”

Albertini listened with amazement to the assertions of the Marchese, and severely reproached himself for so long avoiding an interview with the Count and Countess Alvanio; but his self-condemnation ceased, when he learned that the Count did not even suspect that his lady's little *protégée*,
Josephine,

Josephine, was any other than she had been represented.

Albertini could scarcely suppress his impatience to hear the interesting detail of his daughter's life; but he feared to increase the emotion which still agitated the lovely girl; and the Marchese insisted that no further communication should proceed, till both had recovered from the effects of their late joyful surprise; the day was therefore devoted to the unrestrained indulgence of those delightful sensations which filled the bosoms of this delighted party.

With heartfelt delight, the Marchese observed the lively pleasure which now sparkled in the expressive eyes of his beloved child; affectionately interested in the concerns of Josephine, Rosalia experienced the most exquisite emotions, when contemplating the felicity of her friend; and even Guidoni was scarcely remembered, while she congratulated her on the fortunate

nate circumstance of finding, in one of the most virtuous of men, a parent and protector.

At night, when Rosalia and Josephine had withdrawn, the Marchese informed Father Albertini of the affection subsisting between his daughter and Ferdinand. Albertini received this intelligence with contending emotions.

“The pleasure I feel at this information, my friend,” said the Father, “is lessened by the fears I naturally entertain of being disappointed in the efforts I shall make to procure my pardon from the Pope, and the difficulty of obtaining a reconciliation with Don Carlos. Should I succeed in my attempts, with what pleasure should I bestow the hand of my Josephine on my amiable pupil ! Yet there remains a possibility of failure ; and the daughter of a proscribed, and degraded man, would never be deemed an eligible bride for Ferdinand Alvanio ; nor could I blame the Count for opposing the union with all his power.

power. Whatever may happen, I shall bow with humble submission to the All-wise decree; I have found my child all I could wish her to be, and will rely upon Providence to direct her future fate."

END OF VOL. I.



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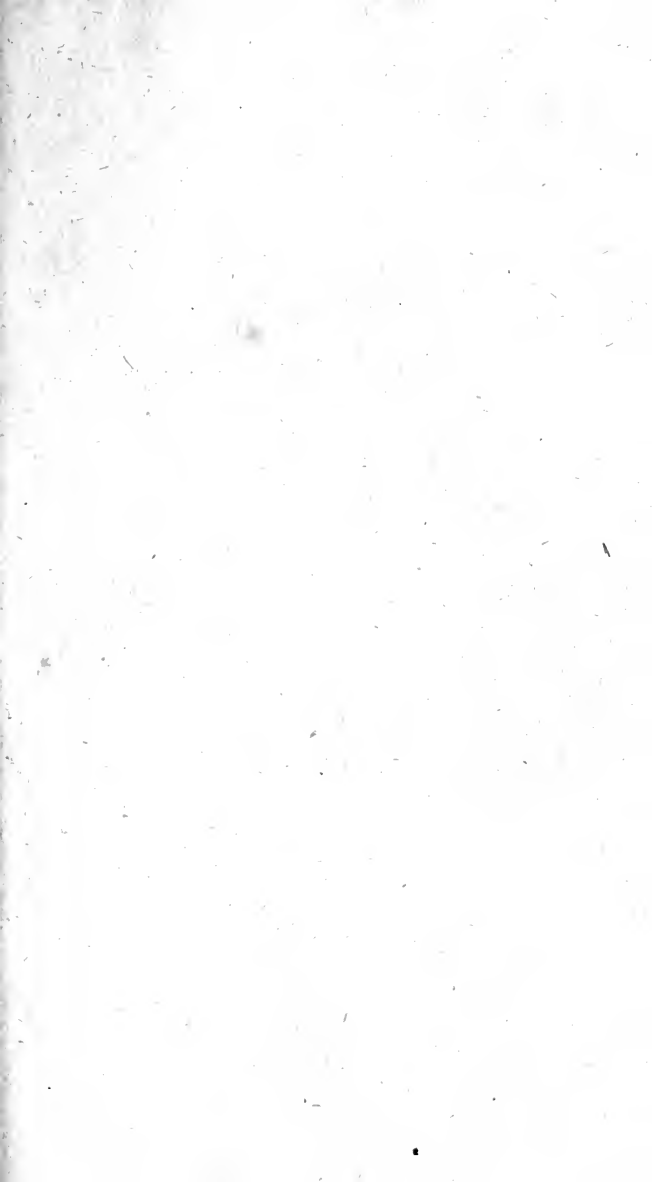
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